STUDIES IN ISLAM

SERIES

ON CONVICTION AND ISLAM

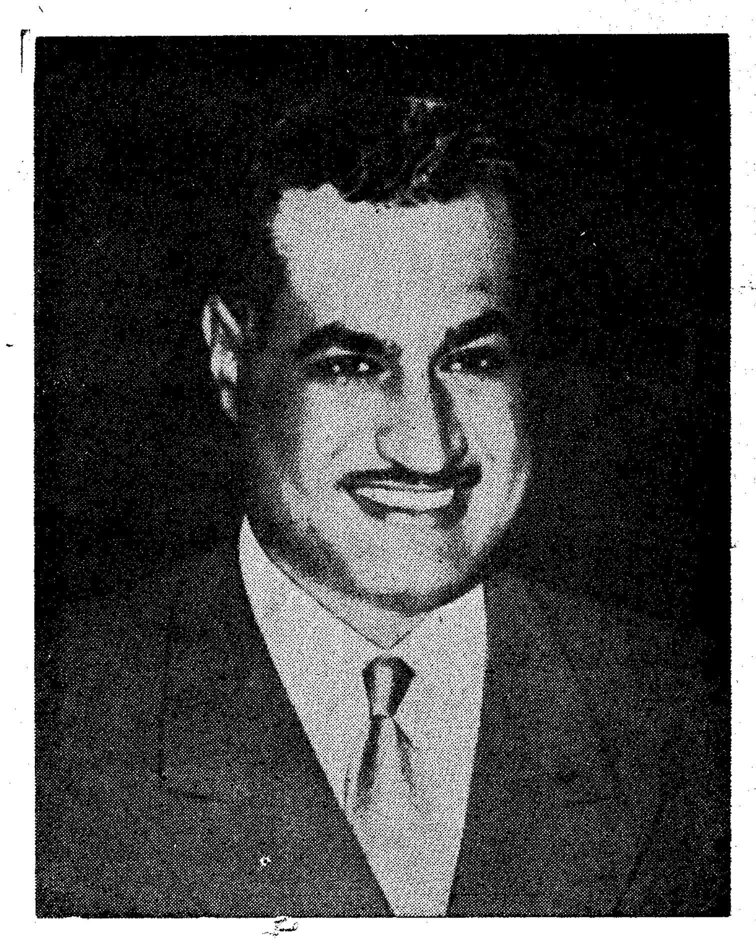
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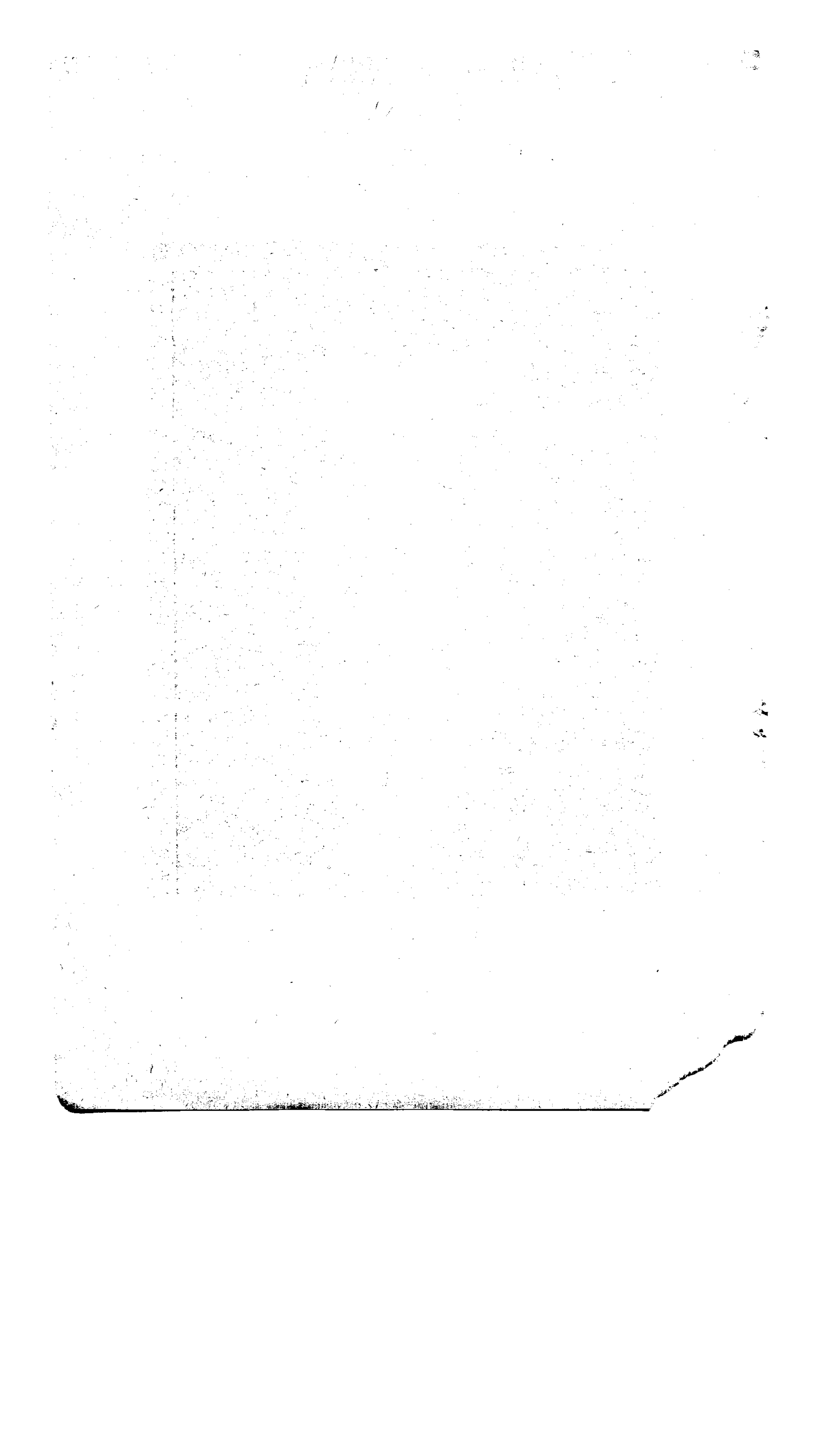
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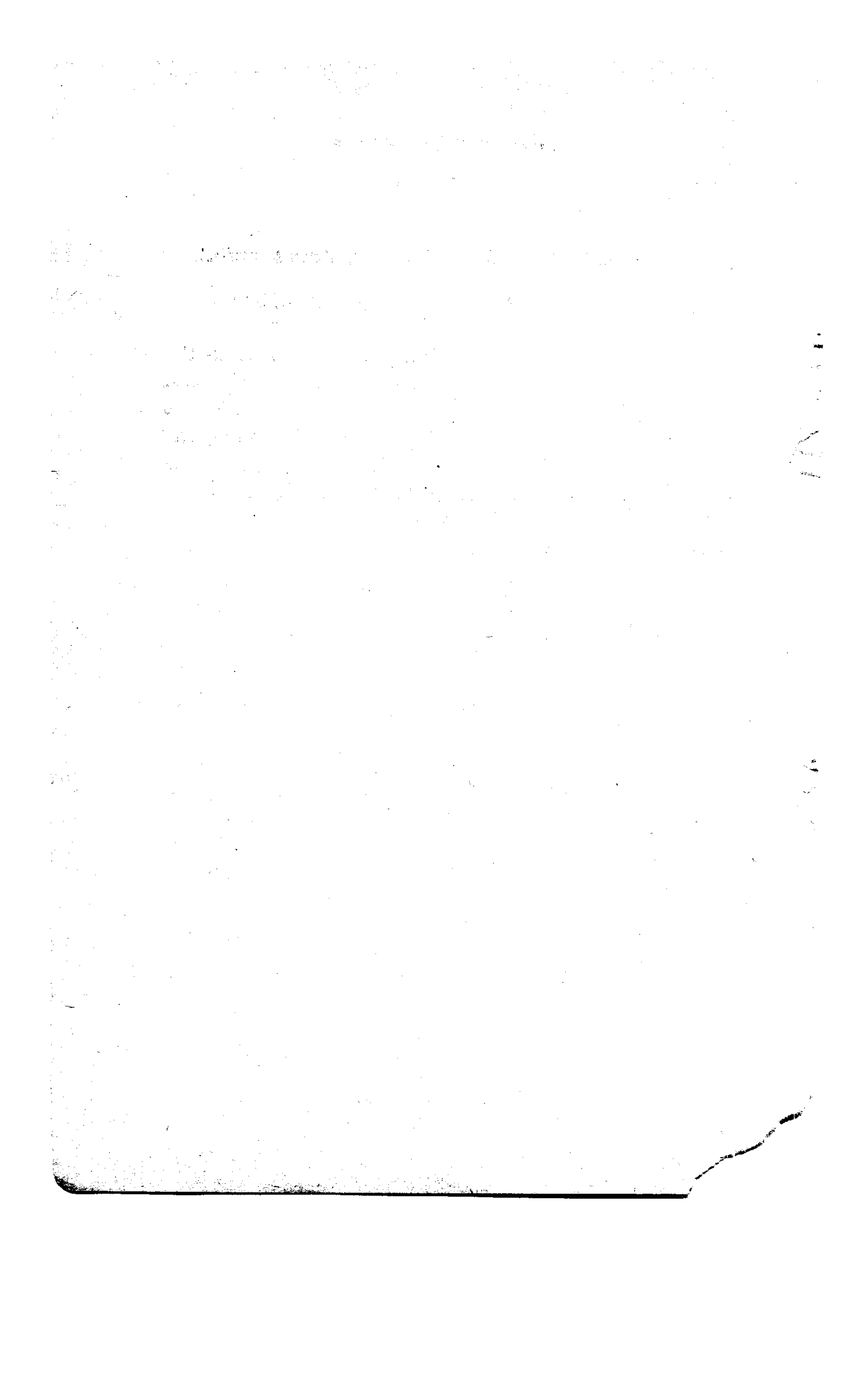
PRESIDENT GAMAL ABDUL NASSER



In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

IN SUBMISSION TO THE SUPREME BEING

This treatise I have written in submission to the Supreme Being, the Lord of the Universe, «Who created me, then He shows me the way, and Who gives me to eat and to drink, and when I am sick, He heals me, and Who will cause me to die, then give me life, and Who, I hope, will forgive my mistakes on the Day of Judgement».



PREFACE

«O mankind; We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you». (1)

I had written this treatise more than twenty years ago, while I was in detention for three years during the second world war.

It was by accident that I re-read the book nowadays. I was extremely surprised because after this long time, and after writing my book (The Human Energy), I was under the impression that I might repudiate most of the ideas which I had elaborated at a time when I was involved in political and national struggle. I believed that I might even disown my previous style in writing because now I prefer to write more objectively and scientifically. However, with the exception of the idea of Evolution about which I have formed a new theory, I do not disagree with even a word of my old treatise nor could I express my disesteem of the style. On the contrary, the theme of the treatise expresses outspokenly my new trends.

No Argument in Religion:

The treatise does not contradict my present course of action. All my talks and thinking are dedicated now to the service of humanity at large, irrespective of religion.

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(1) Surat Al-Hujurat : 13 (The Inner Apartments)

race, colour or nationalism. Here, I deal with the subject of religion and belief in God and try to ascertain the unity and substance of faith. I am of the view that whatever different are the images of God that man visualises according to time and circumstances, all of them meet at one starting point, that is man's feeling that there is a Being who is superior and more powerful than himself who possesses all the perfections denied to man. Under this Supreme Being, man tries to lead a better life. This comprehensive view on the spirit of religious I still hold today I wish all peoples would adopt the same idea and have faith in the creator of this existence who is surely alive and wise and filled with love and mercy.

Greatness of Islam:

The characteristics of Islam mentioned in the second part of the treaties, which are explained in the light of the comparative studies of religions which show the uniqueness of Islam, do not contradict the general idea of mankind. These characteristics are the hope of all mankind, of the United Nations Organisation with all its agencies, of philosophers, of intellectuals, of reformers, of men of letter and of the artists. It is time now for man to pass through a new stage of human development and have faith in the common goal of humanity. Man must believe that unless peoples of the world pull down all barriers and fetters imposed by racialism, nationalism, colour, sect and different economic systems, there will be no security, peace, freedom or real democracy. Without this, humanity will not be spared the evils of wars nor would it enjoy happiness and prosperity.

As the reader of this treatise will see, Islam has no match in calling for world peace, human fraternity and unity among all nations and peoples, irrespective of their inclinations, races, faiths, colours and religions. In a point of fact, it was under Islam that such aspirations and dreams had come true.

Materialism is the Common Danger :

However, it is the duty of all faithful peoples, whatever faiths they are adopting, to realise that the danger which threatens their beliefs does not come from the side of any other religion. As already stated, all religions are based on conviction in idealism and divinations. They attempt to attain a certain form of human perfection. However, danger comes from the prevalent, sweeping and rabid materialism which not only ridicules religions and degrades them as the opium of peoples, but attacks the very basis of idealism, denying man's birth-right to live free and dignified. Materialism considers every discussion on love, mercy, tolerance, justice and benevolence as mere nonesense. To it, these are nothing but traces of ancient ignorance and reaction. The only real talk, it maintains, is only that which deals with class struggles and sanguinary revolutions staged to liquidate reactionary elements. Materialism opines that the law of life stipulates that the strong must defeat the weak. It alleges that this is what the sciences proclaim. It sets an example of what happens in the jungle where it is only the fit that survives. To materialism, this is the rule of evolution.

Thus, some people call upon humanity, in the name of the sciences and advancement, to go back to the laws

of the jungle, to live in its darkness, and to part with the legacy of humanity for which it strove to accumulate it over the years through God's prophets and messengers, philosophers and leaders. This heritage calls for peace, and not war, for mutual cooperation, and not hostility, for the rule of law, and not the rule of the sword, and for amity and love, and not hatred and rancour.

Awakening :

Now that all human beings have started during the last years to get rid of the dreadful nightmare of materialism and are trying again to free themselves from its curse which befell the world in the first half of this century, and that a new wind of change is blowing over the peoples which were entangled in materialism, but started later to denounce the massacres and bondage brought about by the materialistic doctrines, disqualifying wars, bloody revolutions and violence, and preaching peaceful co-existence, I feel content to publish this essay dealing with faiths, religions, and Islam. This essay is a humble contribution towards clearing souls and minds of ignorance and an attempt to disseminate the seeds of hope so that humanity may come to reason and again believe in the ideologies of existence in order to be able to lead a life filled with love, kindness and fraternity.

«And with none but God is the direction of my affair to a right issue. In Him I trust, and to Him I return».

AHMAD HUSSEIN

CHAPTER I

FAITH AND ITS EFFECT

Faith is Instinctive — Civilisation and Culture as Product of Faith — Pharaonic Civilisation — Persian Civilisation — Chinese Civilisation — Greek Civilisation — Faith is Source of Man's Dignity.

Faith is Instinctive:

Faith, as I conceive it, is man's feeling of the existence of a major power, more perfect and potent than his. It is this power that had made creation, and to it everything in the end will return.

The feeling which fills man's heart and conscience that there is really an invisible, perfect and omnipotent power is natural. It is an instinct inseparable from man's life, moral or spiritual. As man strives to get food, drink and air for the upkeep of his physical structure, so does he also feel the motive to try to explore this unseen power, to come near it, and to propitiate it in order to keep both his spiritual and physical structure intact.

Material instincts have to a great extent persuaded man to secure extensive knowledge, to exert more energy, and to produce things to sustain his physique. But it was the spiritual instinct that prompted him to

seek and attain learning and knowledge and achieve evolution. It was also this instinct that encouraged him to go ahead in quest of perfection and idealism. Had it not been for the feeling of an all-powerful and transcendental being and for the feeling that behind all visible things there is an invisible force, and for the fact that for every effect there is an unseen cause, and for the eagerness of man to come near to the spirit and substance of creation — had it not been for all these factors, man's mind might have not found anything to do or any problem to solve and would have even ceased to think. In such a case, man would not have differed from the animal which seeks nothing but to satisfy its physical needs. It was faith that put man's mind into action and urged it to solve the Universe's mysteries and problems, one after the other. It is also faith which has pushed man to discover the generalities after the particulars, the causes after the effect, and the unknown after the known. As a consequence, the sciences and the intellect had developed, laying the foundation for every further material development and advancement. Science has led to action, and faith has always been the source of both the science and the action.

Civilisation and Culture as Product of Faith :

It is a fact that the history of the ancient world is that of religions which in turn are the material image of faith after being converted to movements, sayings and suggestions. To study the early civilisations and people's sciences, knowledges, and the arts, we have to study the relics of their religious institutions and places of worship, material or moral, either in the form of

temples, synagogues, or graves, or in the form of prophets, hymns, scriptures, customs or rites.

Pharaonic Egypt :

We would not have been able to know anything about the history of ancient Egypt had it not been for the remains of its temples, altars and pyramids scattered along the Valley, and for the engravings and drawings which projected their religious life, giving the proof that the greatest civilisation and culture ever known in the ancient history had been based on religion and religious beliefs. It is certain that the first incentive which prompted man to construct a building was his desire to have a solid one, unlike the ordinary places where he used to live in, where he would play host to the deities. This fact appears clearly in the history of ancient Egypt, which is a pattern of other histories of all ancient peoples. Every town in ancient Egypt was initially composed of a temple, surrounded by the residences of inhabitants. These were built in a primitive way of skin, cloth or tree leaves. With the advancement of man, the temple was fortified, its foundation consolidated, and its walls decorated. When the ancient civilisations reached their apex, the temples became more magnificent, with pillars rising loftily in the sky and the buildings extended in all sides, giving the whole structure a grandiose picture. This, however, had been done to satisfy man's desire to glorify and exalt the unknown. For this reason, the ancient Egyptian built the Karnak Temple with its 12 colonnade gallery, a building unparalled either in ancient or modern history. Another example are the Pyramids which became for their eternity

and magnificance the great wonder of the world. They clearly show that the great effort man had exerted, and still exerts, is dedicated to glorify this mysterious active force. The ancient Egyptian civilisation has some secrets and scientific miracles before which even the man of the present time, the time of light and extensive learning, stands aghast. Of these wonders is the ancient Egyptian art of embalmment by which the mummies of ancient Egyptians were preserved for thousands of years. Other wonders are the colours they used in their paintings. They remained for ages unchanged. Embalming was the result of their belief in resurrection. The ancient Egyptians believed that the soul would not return to its body unless it was free from decay. Hence, they invented the art of embalmment and the art of sculpture and engraving which they made on the hardest of rocks which resist all natural elements. The unchanged colours, the sarcophagi which were filled with everything the Egyptian would need in the Hereafter, and the treasures which were discovered in the present times, have dazzled the world. They showed to what extent our forefathers were advanced. In a point of fact, belief and piety were the basis of the ancient Egyptian civilisation.

Persian Civilisation :

Conviction and belief were the basis of the ancient Persian civilisation. It was faith, and faith alone, which elevated the ancient Persians from nomadism and primitive life to a high level of culture and development.

According to the Persian faith, there were in the world two eternal, but contradictory, spirits (1), one was the spirit of good (Ahuramazda), and the other the spirit of evil (Ahriman). These two forces were in continuous strife. The spirit of good comprised life, health, knowledge, learning, construction, development, procreation, fertility and cleanliness, all of which were considered by man good. The spirit of evil, however, comprised death, sickness, drought, epidemics, ruins, ignorance, vice, unemployment and impurity. It was the duty of man to support the power of goodness and strengthen it by combating all forms of evil till the good prevailed. He who had brought a plot of arid land under cultivation was fighting the evil and supporting the god of goodness. Similarly, he who had doubled his production and raised his output of wheat from 6 to 10 cwts. was supporting the god of goodness who called for plenty and affluence, and opposed the god of evil — the god of dearth, destitution and scarcity. He who had restored a decayed building was supporting strongly the spirit of good, because the god of evil used to dwell in ruins and deserted places and felt happy whenever destruction and devastation took place. The man who had dug a canal or a drainage, constructed a road or helped in establishing a public utility was rendering a great service to the god of good who would not be able to win victories except through discipline, improvement and increase of production. He who married and brought forth an offspring and provided for himself a clean and healthy lodging was worshipping the god of good because he was supporting him at the same time in his

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(1) This belief had developed later. Only had the spirit of goodness been considered as eternal.

struggle against evil. Similarly, he who had resisted diseases through medicament, and he who had fought ignorance and declared war against dirt, all such people were obedient slaves of Ahuramazda. They were taking side with him against his arch-enemy Ahriman, the accursed devil.

With this spirit, the Persians acted materially and morally till they attained a high degree of morality and virtuousness. To have an idea of the manners of Persians one can only read the following quotations from the holy book of Persian faith, the Avesta. It says: «The soil which remains for long without tilling is unhappy because it resembles the virgin girl who lives without children and hankers after a male. Blessed is he who looks after his land and cultivation, because it is this land that will afford him with richness exactly as a beloved wife provides her husband with a child». It also says: «Whoever dessiminates good is actually sowing sanctity». It says: «I curse Ahriman, the devil, and admit my servility to Mazda and my submission to Zara (1), my enmity to the devils and my glorification of the angels. I forbid theft, abduction of cattle, plunder and aggression against the villages of the faithful followers of Mazda. I respect the right of the household to have a respectable home and the freedom to conduct their own affairs by themselves so that they can live with their cattle comfortably. I raise my hand and swear sincerely not to plunder and not to attack from now any people believing in Mazda, nor shall I

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(1) Zara or Zoroaster is the prophet of Persians. Some rank him among other prophets and messengers.

attempt to take revenge from them physically or bloodily».

The Avesta also says: «In this house, obedience must be observed and disobedience disappear. Let righteousness and truth reign supreme over lying. Let peace and security prevail everywhere. Let wrangles, squabbles and anxiety disappear. Let this house be known for its generosity, and not for its parsimony, and for modesty, and not for snobbery. Let its slogan be justice, not iniquity».

All the precepts of the Persian faith revolved around the hatred of mendacity and the mendacious. In Persian, the god of evil Ahriman, was a synonym of the word «lying» (1).

These quotations are self-explanatory. They had their own effect on the followers. It is certain that they inspired them to seek perfection and make advancement.

Chinese Civilisation:

In this context, I must refer to the Chinese civilisation which was indeed the greatest of all civilisations ever known by man in ancient history. Before any other country of the world, China had made all the inventions and discoveries, except the steam and electricity, which are still the wonder of the present time. China had known printing, journalism, banking, paper, gun-powder, ceramics, painting and huge trans-ocean

(1) Herodotus had described the Persians as follows: «The Persians hate lying first, and borrowing second. They opine that borrowing leads to inevitable cheating and telling of lies».

liners which raised on their decks groves and orchards to supply the passengers with fresh vegetables (1). Moreover, China had practised a high degree of morality and virtuousness. To realise what prosperity, advancement and affluence the Chinese had achieved, it is enough for one to see that till now the silken textiles, which had been used by them, are still considered the best cloth the civilised world is using. Tea, their national beverage, is the favourite refreshment all over the world. It is used in the backward communities as well as in the advanced societies of the West, namely, England and America. Rice, their staple food, is consumed in almost all parts of the world. Despite the fact that the population of China was very big, yet they forged a political and spiritual unity. The Chinese civilisation was the product of conviction and faith. Their faith was unparalleled. It called for monotheism and non-recognition of priesthood. These are the characteristics of Islam. The Chinese believed that the Universe was not to function properly unless things on earth ran in harmony with everything in heavens. If things on earth were operated according to their fixed pattern, things in heavens would operate then to the complete satisfaction of man. In such a case, there would not be thunderbolts or destructive rains. Nor would the sky become dark or thunder-clouded. The sun would not disappear or eclipse. The earth would be immune from epidemics, diseases and plagues; it will not be hit with drought or barenness. All the natural elements had to work congruently so that man could enjoy happiness

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(1) See Ibn Battutah's book and description of his trip to China and the wonders he had seen there.

and welfare. But what were these patterns and rules which if had ever been disturbed on earth all the elements in the Universe would follow suit ? The code stipulated that peace, justice and order should prevail; that every member of the nation must discharge his duty without fail, from the emperor downward to the most inferior employee in the state, even to the last of its paupers. Man should neither do injustice nor accept to be oppressed. Confucius, in his five sacred books, had defined the duties of each member of the nation. These books constituted the basis of China's great civilisation.

Greek Civilisation :

The Greeks were distinguished from other ancient peoples by their feeling that man was the nearest among other creatures of this Universe to absolute perfection. They believed that man, with his great moral and physical power, could have been the master of the Universe had it not been for his frail structure and short life. Had he been able to live for ever, man would have inevitably become god (1). This idea led the ancient Greeks to believe that gods were equal to human beings. The gods had possessed even man's habits, traditions and thinking, but unlike him, they were immortals. The Greeks imagined that it was always possible for man to avail himself of gods' direct protection, to enjoy their company, and even to co-live and marry with them, provided he would be pretty, powerful and wise. The Greeks went even to a greater extent when they

(1) Here, facts are given as they are. Our commentary on them will come later.

imagined that it was always possible for man to rise to the rank of divinity through heroism or wisdom. In later chapters, we will deal again with this subject and see how this belief had developed to absolute monotheism and transcendence of god. What concerns us now is that the ancient civilisation of the Greeks had stemmed from this belief and was based on it. Since heroism led to immortality, every Greek youth made it a point to do great things so that he would be raised to the rank of heroes. The Olympic games were the product of such belief. The youth from all Greek provinces used to gather at the foot of the Olympus, where the gods lived, to compete with each other in various sports, such as wrestling, disc throwing, high jumping and long-distance running. These games were the greatest of all games and the winners were the greatest ever, since the strongly-built and flexible body was the Greek's ideal. The whole nation had no interest whatsoever save in body-building through sports and athletics.

Since the sound mind existed in the sound body, it was the Greek society, with its able and strong men, that had produced the great thinkers who enriched humanity tremendously. Modern democracy is based on the old Greek's beliefs and ideas. In their view, man had to defend his freedom because it was the sign of human dignity and the main proviso for rising to heroism and greatness. Under democracy, every citizen had to take part in self-rule by participating in enacting laws and in having control over the executive authority which was assumed by elected officers. Under these liberal systems, and with free thinking and self-respect,

the Greeks provided the world with learning and philosophy which greatly contributed to human culture.

There is not enough space here to make a study of the history of all civilised peoples, old and modern. The examples that we have already given show the close relation between faith and civilisation and prove that it is from faith that all forces and human activities spring, aspiring to achieve advancement and evolution.

Faith Creates Man's Dignity :

Since it is proved that there is close relation between civilisation and people's belief, it is certain that the faith of man is responsible for his advancement and greatness. The stronger is man's faith, the more greatness he attains. With faith man excells others of lesser conviction. This is confirmed by the fact that certain people had succeeded in influencing other peoples and in winning the admiration, even the reverence, of millions of others of all times. This was due to the uncompromising belief of such people which made the truth clear to them. They attained perfection and through it, they influenced humanity deeply and immensely.

It is faith, and faith alone, that transforms the inferior to superior, the poor to the rich, the ignorant to the learned, and the feeble to the strong.

It was faith which made of Joan of Arch, the naive villager, a commander of an army, liberator of a country, and the person who put the crown on the head of a monarch.

It was faith also which made of Napoleon, a young man from Corsica, the greatest figure ever known in modern history.

It was faith which inspired Christopher Columbus, the Genevoise navigator, to discover the hemisphere.

It was faith which persuaded the scientists to make inventions and discoveries.

In fact, faith lies behind every effort made to achieve advancement and development. It pushes man to struggle for goodness, to make reforms, to do righteousness and resort to virtue.

Faith is the pass-word which allows man to discover the secrets of the Universe. It is the elixir which transforms everything to gold. It is the life-blood which rejuvenates the body. It is the heat that melts iron and the burning fire and the glittering flame. Faith is the power which blows up mountains. It is by faith that man finds the truth and righteousness. If the heart and soul are filled with faith, man becomes courageous and efficient. With faith man would become great scholar and master. No power can stop him from realising his objectives. No difficulties or obstacles can hinder him from accomplishing his goal. For him, the word 'impossible' is meaningless. In fact, man can do everything because he has associated himself with the original power and doer.

CHAPTER 2
FAITH AND ITS THEME

Is Faith Real or Fancy ? — Doubt Conductive to Certainty — Evidence by Human Conscience — God's Existence is Self-Evident Truth — Life is Proof of God's Existence — Active, Hearing, Seeing Might — It is Wise — Whence Man's Mind.

Is Faith Real or Fancy ?

What is the theme of faith ? What is the truth of the hidden and perfect might which dominates the Universe ? Does it really exist as the overwhelming majority of peoples of all ages admit, or is it as some other people opine some sort of fancies, old myths and a reflection of the fear which accompanied the primitive man who was alarmed by everything in the Universe and who felt weakness and inability ?

Some people theorise that if there is really a certain force in this Universe, it should not be other than that of matter, the visible and tactile force, which was created by chance and then developed into the shape it has taken now through necessity. But this dictum is contrary to the consensus of opinion of people and to the preachings of Prophets and Divine Messages that there is an omnipotent and eternal God, Who had created the whole Universe by His own will.

Doubt Conductive to Certainty :

The pious and the religionists used to rise against the doubters and condemn their ideas because they at-

tacked their sanctities and profaned their divine books. The diffident were subjected to various kinds of persecution which were known at that time and imposed authoritatively by the religious leaders. These diffident gave the true believers a golden opportunity which allowed them to put their faith to test, to correct and add to their conviction, and to synchronise them with reason, logic and the sciences.

Every idea which contends with any religious theory and the concept of divinity should be studied and verified by reason. It should not be met with bigotry and left undiscussed because of protests made in the name of religion or the attacks made against its sacredness. This is exactly what the Holy Quran had done. It mentions all the objections and the criticisms, even the vituperation and insults made against God's Prophet, may peace be upon him, and against the idea of monotheism and the teachings of Islamic divinations. The Quran had reported all these questions in detail, but refuted them by argument. It introduced several proofs to confirm the new faith and establish it firmly in the souls of people. In so doing, the Quran proved that only through argumentation would the real faith be propagated. Without mind's satisfaction there would be no equilibrium or rationality. An example of this is Abraham's prayer to his Lord: «My Lord; Show me how Thou givest life to the dead. He said: Dost thou not then believe? He said: Yea; but to satisfy my own understanding» (1). Another example is the transformation of the leaders of the Quraish tribe who fought

(1) Surat Al-Baqarah : 260 (The Cow)

Islam, foremost among them was 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, from arch-enemies of Islam to great supporters of it. With their belief and religious extravagance they had dominated the whole world. Had it not been for argument and conviction, their belief had not been able to reach such an extent of strength and maturity. This is an established fact which is seen in all times and climes. On many occasions, most of the devout people had for some time in their life some doubts in their religion. It is rightly said that doubt is conductive to certainty.

I think that any cultured man cannot have a real faith unless after he comprehends all rational arguments which strengthen his belief. It is not of conviction and true faith that man should imitate others, agree to what the masses say, or comply with the inherited traditions and indoctrination, without understanding the genuine evidences.

This may explain the backwardness of the Muslims in the present time, their lagging behind other civilised peoples, and their inability to accomplish great achievements or contribute to building up of human culture. (1) The majority of Muslims are so ignorant that they cannot understand the real faith. They perform worship only because it had been performed by their forefathers. They are Muslims merely because they were reared in an Islamic community and born to Muslim parents. They are governed by tradition and, thus, obliged to act accordingly. They are imitators and copyists. To these,

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(1) This was written, as mentioned in the Preface, twenty years ago. Today, the Muslims are trying to keep pace with modern civilisation.

and the like, the Quran refers as follows: «The desert Arabs say: 'We believe'. Say 'Ye have no faith; but ye (only) say 'We have submitted our wills to God' for not yet has faith entered your hearts». (1)

The masses of the Muslims will not really be grounded in the faith or prosper unless they become well educated and aware of the substance of their beliefs and the secrets of their religion. They should know why it excells other religions and what are the proofs they would introduce to support their argument. This is exactly what I intend to do in this treatise. In my attempt to prove the existence of God, I will start with arguments which reason easily accepts.

Evidence by Human Conscience :

The first evidence of the existence of God comes from man's conscience. It is certain that no one has seen God, the Active, the Regulator and the Creative Power. It is also certain that we cannot feel this power with any of our senses. Therefore, it was logical that people would deny the existence of such a force. But, on the contrary, they unanimously are agreed to its existence. Why does not the human soul feel comfortable unless it is rest assured of the existence of this power? Why would we become very pleased when we categorically and positively assert its existence? If I state now that under no circumstances would any one suspect the existence of this creative power, the majority of readers will feel peace and accept the idea

(1) Surat Al-Hujurat : 14 (The inner Apartments).

though I will not produce any conclusive proof, giving nothing but verbal reaffirmation.

People may differ in their sincerity in practising the rites of a certain religion and may also differ in their outlook to religions in general, as they differ in race, colour, language and environment. But, despite this, they possess some sort of faith that in the Universe there is a Creative Lord Who conducts its affairs alone.

Faith is inherent in the nature of almost everyone. Whenever man's attention is drawn to the existence of an invisible creative force, his heart palpitates with satisfaction. Everyone feels this sensation irrespective of being educated or uneducated, great or small, European or negro, Arab or British. They all are agreed to the existence of such a power, including even those who erred and thought that such a great power was inherent in the sun, the moon, the burning fire, the flowing waters, the high mountains or the idols. Though they seem to differ in their belief, yet they agree on the substance; they all believe in the existence of a Creative Force. (1)

This general human feeling which exists in the conscience of almost everyone is the first evidence that confirms the existence of this unseen creative power. Man's mind can never imagine that people unanimously agree to a certain fact while it does not really exist. This, in fact, is the first evidence. (2)

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(1) The communists are not excluded; they believe that "dialectical materialism" is the creative power. Whatever the names given to the creator, the substance of the idea remains unchanged.

(2) In my book (Human Energy) I had pointed out that if man's mind ascertains the existence of anything, this should have certainly existed or it would certainly exist in future.

God's Existence is Self-Evident Truth :

It is an estabished fact that man's mind is created with some basic facts in it which are self-evident truths. With these truths, the mind acquires the knowledge and learning necessary for its survival. No healthy-minded man can suspect these self-evident truths, otherwise he would be upset in his thinking.

When we say that two are bigger than one, that the whole is greater than the part, that anything cannot be present in two separate places at one time, and that a substance cannot be movable and motionless simultaneously, we would be introducing self-evident truths.

The first self-evident truth might be that for everything done there should be a doer, for everything created, a creator, for every event, a perpetrator, for every movement, a mover, and for every effect, a cause.

Since everything in the Universe is expressive of its being created because it could be conceived by senses, and it has a beginning and an end, then there should be a creator of it. To say otherwise is to undermine one of the mind's obvious axioms.

It is surprising that though there are people who admit that everything the mind thinks of, significant or insignificant, great or small, must have a cause and prime mover, yet they deny the existence of such mover, creator and First cause. They want the human mind to imagine that in vain were created the various creatures, the planets, the distant horizons, the shining suns, the twinkling stars, the shining comets, the running rivers, the clashing waves, the high mountains, the vast deserts, the lofty trees, the ripe fruits, the fragrant

roses, the warbling birds, the swimming fish, the reptiles, the insects, the various kinds of animals, the tame, the wild, and the multi-coloured, and lastly, the human being with his nice and attractive constitution, erect carriage, gaiety and vitality. Could man been created in vain whereas it was he who alone had free thinking, introduced sciences, acquired knowledge, built up civilisations and cultures, and made laws and various systems ? For what had all kinds of worship been prescribed ? For what had the prophets, leaders and reformists been sent ? What was the reason for Divine revelations of the holy books and religions ?

Under no circumstances would a sound mind admit that. Therefore, the idea of the first cause, the creation, is a rational necessity which must be accepted and admitted by reason.

On the other hand, self-evident truths require that the Creative power be qualified with all the attributes of absolute perfection, contrary to what exists in this Universe, which is imperfect. If this creative power is imperfect, it had to be treated exactly as other creatures over which there should be a major and perfect force which had created them. Since perfection is a result of oldness, eternity and unision, such a power must then be old, self-sustaining and one. (1)

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(1) It is very difficult for man's mind to try to envisage and comprehend the substance and nature of perfection. It does not know how does perfection exist without having a beginning or an end. For, it appears that human mind is a part of this Universe. Absolute perfection is the whole, and the part cannot encircle the whole. The only thing that human mind can conceive is that there is a whole behind the various parts, and that the mind is a part of a whole, with no power to =

Life is Proof of God's Existence:

Where had this breath-taking phenomenon of life come from ? How had life been formed since everything in the Universe was composed of solid, blind, dumb and deaf material ?

Perceptibility and inspection have clearly showed that there is a dividing line between the solid matter scattered in the Universe and the sensational and developing life. Though matter sometimes may undergo some changes, variations or substitutions, yet it remains unchanged in substance for ever. It is senseless, mindless, having no property of growth. Contrary to that is the living organism which grows and matures and feeds on solid and lifeless materials which immediately turn inside the body into alive elements of blood, flesh and bone. These become impressionable and in them lies the secret of life which, in turn, makes every small cell change in favourable conditions into a seed of life. The cell itself is divided into two cells, then into four, and ten, and a hundred, and a thousand, and millions and millions. How could such an alive cell possess such a unique property which no other creature in this Universe possesses ? What is the secret of its growth and multiplication ? How would it take all these forms and finally create a new living substance which adds to the riches and the process of evolution of life, be it a green flower-

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= encompass it. The only thing, too, the human mind can realise is that behind all various phenomena lies a substance the nature of which can never be perceived, because the mind is governed by matter, and as such, it cannot rid itself of its froms, properties, rules and laws. The creative and perfect power can never be measured or governed by such things.

ing tree with fragrance, fruits and timber, or an animal created of flesh, blood, having milk, skin and wool, or a human being with prettiness, smartness, mind and reason.

All this come from a small cell. The size of one million of these cells would never exceed in size the head of a small pin. This small cell is like a miniature of the world. The whole world seems to be an enlarged cell. The small cell contains a world of sensation, intuition, thought, reason, morality, virtue and other faculties and characters. Besides, there is another world which is constituted of matter composed of flesh, bone, blood, skin, hair, complexion, diseases and deformities. Any child is born with his parents' moral and physical characters, inheriting their illnesses and temperaments. The child is a small cell which ran out of the male into the female. Where has this strange power, the power of life, come from? How has it augmented? Certainly, it has come out of a living force which fills, envelopes and governs the whole of the Universe.

Is Matter the Source of Life?

Materialists theorise that in the end, life is one of the images of matter. If we have failed so far to discover the secret of life, or, in other words, to discover the link between the solid matter and the alive matter, the sciences will soon discover it. If this is realised, and this is quite probable, and the sciences succeeded in producing life out of solid materials, such an act will confirm, and not deny, the existence of a governing creative force. For, what is there that puts a hard, solid and lifeless material into motion and causes it to grow and take va-

rious forms, discharging various functions in life, some of them giving light, others causing darkness, heat or chill, while some others are causing life or death.

What makes matter so active in producing the various and limitless number of creatures? What makes it discharge its duties properly and accurately?

Laws and Necessity:

In reply to these queries the materialists say that matter is governed and instituted by particular patterns and laws. They make it develop according to necessity and exigency. Hence, the infinite number of various creatures and of the functions they execute according to various conditions and circumstances. This may be true, for it is clear that this Universe is governed and conducted by special patterns and laws according to which it moves without divergence. According to the Holy Quran, «*No change wilt thou find in the practice (approved) of God*». (1) To admit that matter is governed by patterns and laws, which induce it to development, diversification and creation of life, is in itself a deep belief. In all times and climes man had believed in the unseen power which governs and dominates the Universe. But what are these laws? What is their substance? What is the necessity which compels the matter to react? Why was this a necessity? Who made it a necessity? Who made matter subjugated to this necessity and force it to react accordingly? Why has this necessity been so wise and well-balanced that it had made matter develop and attain perfection? In fact, the laws

(1) Surat Al-Ahzab : 62 (The Confederates).

and the necessity cannot be material, but pure rational. Believing in them does not contradict our belief that there is an unseen force which governs matter. Because of this dominance and superiority, this unseen power is proficient, able and eternal.

Alive, Seeing and Hearing Power :

It is certain that the power governing matter, regardless of the name it takes, is alive. For if it is inanimate, holding not the secrets of life in the Universe, how would it produce life ? If it does not have the secrets of the power of vision, how would it grant it to others ? Again, if it does not hold the secrets of hearing, how could it create it ? A mind cannot contemplate that life and heart throbing can be produced out of a lifeless power, that vision comes from a blind force, and that hearing is created by a deaf force. One of the well known axioms is that one cannot give what he does not have. If these laws which govern matter cannot hear, then how would they grant the power of hearing ? If they do not see, how can they grant vision ? If they are lifeless, how can they grant life to matter ?

From this it appears that those who uphold the theories of pure materialism are obliged to attribute to matter all the qualities which the true believers in God, of all times and climes, ascribe to the creative power which is unseen, eternal, competent, alive, hearing and seeing.

Wise and Well-Balanced Power :

It is impossible for the mind to imagine that such a force does not possess reason and wisdom. Man cannot

inspect any instrument of precision without thinking of the unusual human mind which invented it and managed to make all its parts work congruously, without which it would not play its proper part in the world of motion and production.

The human mind is behind every part of any instrument or machine, though it does not constitute a part of it. Though the machine is made of materials and metals, yet the human mind is outspread in all its parts, in the form of rules and theories formulated especially for the motion of the machine. The Universe is like a huge mechanical machine, and it is a wonderful and precise one. In the Universe, there are radiant celestial bodies as well as dark bodies, each one of them moves in a fixed orbit in the space. From their rotation, the day, the night, the heat, the cold, relaxation and density, are created, bringing into existence various elements and creating life itself. All of these work in an astounding systemical way. The Quran says: «*It is not permitted to the sun to catch up the moon, nor can the night outstrip the day: Each (just) swims along in (its own) orbit (according to law)*». (1) According to this accuracy, it is now easy for man to forecast the exact time, even in seconds and minutes, of the sunrise and sunset of a day a thousand years from now. Each atom in this mysterious and spacious Universe does not move except by a specific and particular rule.

Therefore, it is impossible for the mind, especially that of the scientist, to imagine that this Universe is not conducted by a wise and regulating power.

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(1) Surat Yasin: 40.

If man believes that without his mind he cannot do anything, even if it is trivial, how would then the Universe, including man himself, be conducted and run without a guiding force? No human mind can entertain such a thought. (1)

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(1) Newton, the great physicist, asks people not to have any doubt in the existence of the creator because it is not logical that the existence is conducted only by necessity. He opines that a blind and homogeneous necessity cannot produce these varieties of creation or existence itself, with all its congruous elements. Such a creation can never be brought into being except by an immortal, wise and willing being. It is certain that the movement of stars and planets is not caused only by gravity. The stars and planets are moved towards the sun by a certain power and in order that these bodies rotate around the sun, there should be a divine power which is pushing them to the tangent of their orbits. It is clear that there is no reason for all the planets and their satellites to rotate in one direction and at one level without any significant change. The management of his process indicates that there is a wise power which tends to it. Moreover, there is no any natural cause that makes these planets and their satellites rotate in such a particular and fixed speed, and in fixed orbits, with one common centre. In order that such a system works precisely, there should be a cause (power) which should know the substance of these bodies, the components of various celestial bodies, the gravitational power they produce, the different distances between the planets and the sun, and between the satellites and Saturn, the Earth and Jupiter. Finally, such a power must be aware of the speed with which the planets and their satellites rotate around other bodies, which may constitute a centre for them.

These bodies and the system under wich all these different bodies move indicate that there is a (cause), which is not blind, and which had not been created haphazardly. This cause must be knowing mechanics and engineering.

Newton adds that it is difficult for man's mind to imagine that the atoms composing the celestial bodies are not conducted by limitless thinking. The scattered atoms are divided into two parts, one shining, which is directed to a certain course, creating the shining bodies such as the sun and the stars, and the second dark, which goes to another =

Whence Man's Mind?

Now we come to the eternal question: Where has mind come from? Previously, we have enquired: How had life been created? Physicists and biologists may be able to explain the process of life in a pure automatic way. They can prove how the solid matter had been transformed into an alive substance. But it is impossible for them to claim that human thinking and perception originate from an automatic or chemical process. Automatic mechanism and chemical interaction are always governed by particular laws. The human mind, unlike anything else in the Universe, is not subject to any bounds or restricted by specific restrictions nor it becomes inanimated in a certain form or another. The mind is continually developing and changing. It is free from any restriction and submits to no regulation. It is free either to soar in the sky or remain stagnant with animals and insects. It is also free either to submit to the creative force in existence or rebel and deny it. Mind can either do good or bad things. Any spoken word or any movement is received by the mind either by applause or with disapproval, with backing or with con-

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= direction, forming the dark bodies like the planets and their satellites.

Newton then enquires: How had the bodies of animals been created in such a wonderful artistry? For what have their parts and limbs been brought into existence? Is it comprehensible that the eye is created without any knowledge of visibility and its regulating laws, and the ear without knowledge of the laws of sound? How are the movements of animals repeated automatically? Who had created all these instincts in animals? Don't these creatures, which had been created in nice and complete form, prove that there is a transcendent god, alive, wise, who exists everywhere, sees everything and is aware of the whole of things?

demnation. The same word may be expressed before tens or hundreds of people, but with different reaction. Moreover, one may like today a thing which he had disliked the day before. Similarly, he may like something which he had disliked earlier. A virtue practised by some people may be a sin to others. Something may be pretty to some people, but ugly in the eyes of others.

The mind has driven people to various and different directions. Man's mind is free to do anything it wishes. It cannot be defeated or compelled to do anything it disapproves. Where has this free, wise and willing force come from if there was not in this Universe a major and omnipotent power, which is absolute, free, wise, willing and active. In fact, man's mind is a gift from such power.

To deny the existence of this force is more difficult than to admit and confirm it.

CHAPTER 3

FAITH IN ITS PRELIMINARY STAGES

Development of Faith — Mothers Worship — Forefathers Worship — Zoolatry — Plantation Worship — Natural Elements Worship — Heliolatry and Astrolatry.

Development of Faith :

The human mind, which is the creation of the Creative Being, did not attain maturity overnight. It has passed through various stages of developments, imaginations, suggestions and conjecture. In these stages it attained moral maturity and a great lot of learning and knowledge. Unlike other elements of life, the human mind is in continuous process of development and evolution.

The man living in modern times may not differ much from the pre-history man as regards anatomy and physiology. There is no doubt that comparison can never be made between the mentality of the modern enlightened person and that of the man who lived a few thousand years ago. In a point of fact, there is great difference between an educated and an uneducated man, though they may be living together in a certain period. Therefore, we must not criticise the ancient peoples for

groping about faiths awkwardly. They are not to blame, because they lived at a time when the mind was still in its early stages. Without this bungling and early suppositions, we would not have been able to reach the present stage.

Our present belief of the superiority of creative Divinity is based on the early primitive beliefs. As the skyscrapers of today are a magnified picture of the first small cottage built by the primitive man, and as the ocean-liner is the advanced and improved shape of the first mass of logs the primitive man tried to float on water, so are our present beliefs which would not have been so developed had there been no primitive beliefs. Therefore, it is incumbent on man, in his attempt to correct his belief and free it from any blemish, to study the ancient beliefs and see how they had evolved slowly till they have occupied their present prominent place in the advanced and civilised communities. Man should also perceive how had beliefs remained in their primitive stages in certain communities which were obliged under certain circumstances to lead such a primitive life. An example are the aborigines which live in the equatorial regions of Africa and in the many islands scattered in the Pacific. Man should also study how the old and strange beliefs, which are unacceptable to the modern mind, still have their influence on the common and the uneducated as well as the educated man in different human societies.

Mothers Worship :

We have stated that faith is man's feeling of imperfection and of the existence of a more perfect power

which was responsible for his creation. Since the birth of man, he tried to search for this power amidst the surrounding elements and creatures from which he got protection and help. It was natural then that human mind had regarded in the outset the mother as that creative power.

Man is engendered by his mother. The moment he breathes the air of life, he has to depend on her entirely. It is she who gives the child food when he feels hungry, and nurses and protects him, bestowing on him her kindness and compassion. When he grows up a little, she directs and teaches him how to lead his own way of life independently.

In the primitive society, there was no accordant family, and the result was that the mind did not consider the father as a creative god. At that time, only the mother was considered the source of life. Man continued to adopt this idea for centuries during which time he developed his mind and thinking. He thought that all creatures were created by goddesses. When he introduced the languages, he made all the great elements females. The sky, the earth and the sun, the three sources one of which must have created man, were all referred to as females.

Even in the present time, we still treat them as females. Occasionally, we refer to the earth as « our mother, the earth ». Even after the appearance of gods, the goddesses continued to reign supreme. Isis, undoubtedly, was the most famous goddess in Egypt and it was she alone who became universal. To it the Romans showed complete obedience. Athens was the most reputed

and beloved Greek goddess. They made it symbol of wisdom. To the Romans, her counterpart was Minerva. Other goddesses were Ishtar in Assyria and Babylon, and Lat and 'Uzza in pre-Islamic Arabia. All these peoples considered the deities and angels as females.

The Holy Quran had described this attitude. It says: *(The pagans), leaving Him, call but upon female deities*». (1)

This may confirm the idea that mother's worship, who was thought to be the source of life, was the first idea which came to the human mind because of the things he had seen and felt.

Forefathers Worship :

But soon man enjoyed stability and the child was reared by both the mother and the father. The child realised that it was the father who possessed all the authority and power and, consequently, he had to be revered and that protection had to be sought from him. Besides motherhood, masculinity started to be regarded in reverence. But continuous observations had instructed the human mind that the mother could not beget children unless after having sexual intercourse with a male and that if the mother had to live alone, even for ever, she would not conceive. This meant that life could not be created unless after male's intercourse with the female. Since the father was the strongest, and had the upper hand over the family and the female, the human

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(1) Surat Al-Nisaa : 117 (The Women).

mind started to attribute creation not to the mother, but to the father, or at least, to both of them.

This change of thought was a great stride in the process of development of man's mind. Though the hu man mind was certain from what had been seen and felt that it was the mother who carried the foetus in her womb, and that the foetus had to disconnect itself from her after a time, then start to grow, feeding on her breast, yet he had forgone that idea and attributed the first cause of life, i.e., creation, to the father, the male, and not to the mother, the female.

Sequence of Causes:

No sooner had the mind arrived to this point than it started going on exploring the secret of life. It is still doing this till now. The father, who gave life to his son, knew that he himself was a son of a former father, and that this father was in turn a son of another father. Therefore, the grandfather was to be the origin of life, the powerful and the protector and defender of his sons against the world of spirits. He, therefore, had to be offered oblations and everybody had to seek his satisfaction, assistance and protection. Thus was created the most powerful belief ever known in olden times — the worship of the forefathers. Later, this worship was modified to worship of the dead in general, whether they were heroes, leaders, monarchs, or mere fathers or grandfathers. Till now, the official religion of the great people of Japan is the Shinto, which is a combination of the worship of ancestors and that of the Emperor. To them, the Emperor is the progeny of the first forefather

who descended from the sun to rule over the earth. Every Japanese family, even now, worships its Emperor as well as its forefathers. In tribulations, they seek from them help and wisdom, and to them they offer sacrifices.

Though China, unlike Japan, had deposed its emperor, the son of the heavens, and proclaimed itself a free republic, yet the majority of the Chinese population still maintain the forefathers worship. Everybody there had to behave as if he were in the presence of his ancestors. He tries his best to please them and avoid annoying them. The Chinese were under the impression that their actions will go back to their ancestors, and that according to the nature of such actions, the ancestors would either be honoured or humiliated. (1)

Zoolatry :

When the primitive man had venerated his mother and father and upgraded them after death to divinity, he thought that the animal was to come from another origin, or, in another term, from another god. The plantation, too, was to grow at the instance of a third god.

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(1) The present official religion of China (1964) is Marxism. One should not be surprised of our description of Marxism as a religion, because, in fact, it has the nature and characteristics of religions. It has prophets, Marx and Lenin, and its own holy books, Das Kapital and other works of Lenin. It also has its own Mecca to which they go for pilgrimage, Moscow. One of their religious rites is it worship the dead. Till now, they keep the body of Lenin embalmed and honour it with great saintliness. If the new religion lacks a god, Stalin had made of himself, during his lifetime, a god. The Marxists, as any other religious fanatics, are prepared to execute, even to brun to death, any opponent to their views, exactly as the Church used to do in the Medieval Ages, and as Stalin had done in his lifetime amidst the applause of the Marxists.

Man thought that everything apart from him was self-independent, having its own source. This, actually, was the thinking of man in the primitive stages.

Since man's mind had been able to distinguish from the outset between the good and the bad, and between what would delight him and what would annoy him, it had to conceive that besides the god of virtue there should be another god for vice. Since the animal was the first creature on earth which was capable of injuring and frightening man, and man had seen that some human beings were devoured by lions, tigers, crocodiles, and other wild beasts, it was natural that he would fear them. Soon, the human mind took these beasts as gods of mischief, and for this reason, he tried his best not to provoke them. Hence, the ancient worship of animals, such as the crocodile, the serpent and the jackal which exhumed the dead bodies. To please the beast and to prevent it from taking the dead bodies out of the graves, the ancient Egyptian used to offer them food at the edge of the desert.

The Dog, the Calf, the Cow:

By the passage of time, some of these wild animals were domisticated and became of great help to man. They were worshipped, not as gods of evil, but as gods of goodness. The dog was worshipped by the herdsmen and the calf and the cow by the people who inhabited the cultivated lands, like Egypt and India.

Today, we still see some traces of such worships in certain communities. In Egypt, for instance, some animals are still said to have some particular secrets. Till

recently, embalmed crocodiles were hung above the entrance of some houses. (1) A myth is still observed among common people, even among the majority of people, about the snake which inhabits each house. The snake charmers and the followers of the Rifaei sect try to establish the legend by extracting snakes out of some houses. The black cats in this country have stories and legends. This is the trace of old Egyptian beliefs which remained for long in the minds of the Egyptian peasants who were not highly advanced.

The same thing happens in India where the cow is sacred.

In the Asian communities, where most of the animals are sanctified, and even in the most progressive societies of Europe, the traditions of the past still prevail. The Europeans are the descendents of the Aryans who migrated from Central Asia. They were nomads and for them the dog was sacred, and this is why the Europeans like the dog and show it all kinds of care and kindness. In fact, the Europeans do not show these sentiments out of reverence or worship, but as a continuation of the practice of old traditions.

Plantation Worship:

Not only had the animals been worshipped by man in the past, but the plants too were considered as sacred creatures and, consequently, accorded the same treat-

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(1) Near the house where I lived, in Al-Jammalah, Toloun District, Cairo, there was the residence of a mystic. Above its gate, he hanged an embalmed crocodile which filled me with terror. By the passage of time, I got used to it. But our parents continued to frighten us with it in our childhood.

ment. In most of the primitive communities, old and huge trees were regarded the creators of human beings and the donors of life. (1)

Such a thinking was of course accepted from a man who lived in thick jungles full of wild animals. Even now, the jungle gives the same impression to most of the tribes which live in the Equatorial regions.

As regards the other tribes which developed and took to agriculture, they reversed their worship to that of some plants, like rice and wheat. In most parts of Burma, Malay and East-India Islands, the rice is still considered a deity. This should not be surprising because rice is the staple food there.

Natural Elements Worship:

Since man's mind, as previously mentioned, had deified all the natural elements and creatures which were unknown to him and which frightened or helped him, it was natural that riprians would venerate the running waters without which they could not survive. They looked at the water as the source of human life. The Nile in Egypt, and the Ganges of India, together with other rivers in other agricultural lands, were regarded as chief deities. The Nile remained sacred by Egyptians even after the advent of Islam. Stories were told at that time that its waters were springing from under a dome in Paradise. Only when its sources in

(1) In Egypt, there is still a tree in Mataria, called the Tree of the Virgin, which is sanctified by certain factions of the people. They seek its blessings and pray to it for recovery from illness. They intercede with it to get their needs satisfied, claiming that Virgin Mary had lived for some time under its shadow.

Ethiopia and the Equator were explored did the well-vested religionists stop talking about the Nile's flow from Paradise.

In North Africa, where most of the pious Muslims know nothing about the discovery of the sources of the Nile in the Equator and Ethiopia, they still believe that it springs from Paradise.

An Algerian friend, the late scholar Al-Fadeel Al-Wartallani, told me that in Algeria, the people still implore God in the speeches delivered at Friday congregational prayers in mosques to make the waters of the Nile reach them.

The Ganges in India is still sacred. Hundreds of thousands, even millions, of Indians go to it seeking its blessings and medicament.

Thus were the rivers sanctified and worshipped in all agricultural communities. In the mountainous regions, the mountains and their peaks covered with snow around the year were also worshipped. Anyone who looks at a mountain from below, at its foot, dwindles before its majesty. Looking at it, man realises his smallness. It is no wonder then if man had been moved by such feelings. He began to revere the majestic mountains since his birth. Whenever he would ask his father about them, the father would reply that he himself had seen them since he was a child in this form and that his forefathers had all been reared under their shadows, the shadows of undwindling greatness and unchanged majesty.

If evidence inspires man to believe that everything on earth is changeable, then the mountains should have

been the unvarying and substantial source from which life began and the pivot of the Universe as well.

The Tibetans in China, who live at the foot of the Himalayas, still worship and deify some of the mountains peaks.

Those who lived on the shore of big seas had to consider the clashing waves the creative lord who gave life to everything. Till now, all the inhabitants of the islands of the Pacific still hold the same belief.

On the other hand, those who lived near volcanoes had considered them, or their lava, the origin of life. And those who dreaded thunders, winds or torrential rains had to sanctify and deify them because they were creative elements.

In sum, the human mind had been influenced in its primitive stage by the geographical milieu in which man had lived, and by the conditions of living which obliged him to select his sanctities and worships. He venerated all other creatures which were superior to him, or which he failed to understand, or upon which he depended in satisfying his needs. He also revered any other creature which frightened or did harm to him.

The impact of these beliefs is still seen among the majority of laymen who interpret geographical phenomena in the light of legends and superstition. This is nothing but a repetition of the old myths which deified such natural elements and phenomena. Thunder, for instance, was the scream of angels while checking the winds and beating them with iron rods. Certain storms were the flatulence of some spirits or demons. Some fountains and wells were dug by the angels, such as

the Zamzam well in Hejaz, which was dug by Gabriel, the chief angel. As this spring of water was, till Zubaida spring was drilled, the only reservoir from which the Meccans and inhabitants of the surrounding hills took water, it would be possible for anyone to realise the close relation between man's need of anything and the reverence he showed to it. That was how man's mind had understood things in its primitive stage.

Heliolatry and Astrolatry :

It was natural that the sun during the day, and the stars in the night, had allured man's mind and made him feel their power and effect on the Universe. Whenever the sun rose, its rays enveloped the whole Universe, and life re-started on earth. The birds would leave their nests and the animals their dens and the foliage grew, yielding fruits and flowers. Man was energetic and brisk and the atmosphere full of life's activities. When the sun set, darkness would prevail, gloom spread, living creatures hasten to their domiciles to sleep and the whole Universe would be overspread with stillness and darkness as if the entire world had become dead. The moment the sun rises again, darkness vanishes and light spreads, filling the souls and hearts with reverence, compassion and meekness.

The remarkable phenomena of the alteration of the day and the night and the sun's great impact on the world and creatures inspired man's mind to dedicate to the sun most of his submission and worship and take it as super-god, considering it the source of all life. This happened at a time when man worshipped a river, a mountain, a piece of stone, a cat, a crocodile, thunder or

lightning. The sun was the common deity in all ancient religions and beliefs. In addition to every nation's local deities, the sun was considered the creator of human beings, of spirits and also of other deities in the Universe.

In Egypt, all the deities and Pharaohs came from the sun. In Japan, the Emperor came from the shining sun. The religion of the Assyrians and Babylonians made the sun its theme. The famous gods of various peoples and the biggest of idols were those representing the power of the sun.

In the following chapter we will see how was the sun the starting point from which human mind came to know monotheism.

When the human mind looked up to the heavens and the skies searching for deities, it was making in fact one of its astounding leapings. When man left the earth with its dark materials and limited phenomena and turned his face towards the limitless sky with its shining, lights, he had then passed half the way towards discovering the transcendental truth.

The Quran had nicely portrayed how the heavens had enticed the mind to try to explore their secrets. This is seen in the description of Abraham's attempt to discover the reality of the Universe. The Quran says: «*When the night covered him over, he saw a star. He said: 'This is my Lord.' But when it set, he said: 'I love not those who set.' When he saw the moon rising in splendour, he said: 'This is my Lord', but when the moon set, he said: 'Unless my Lord guide me, I shall surely be among those who go astray'. When he*

saw the sun rising in splendour, he said: 'This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all)'. But when the sun set, he said: 'O my poeple: I am (now) free from your (guilt) of giving partners to God. For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to God'». (1)

Astrolatry had its effect on the majority of people who still believe in astrology and horoscopy. They believe that there is relation between any person and a particular star. They attribute to some stars the quality of having good luck and to some others bad luck. The astrologers were held in high esteem by kings, caliphs and emperors until recently, and even after the propagation of religions which discredited belief in stars. They had not been disfavoured by the nobility and the educated classes unless after the development of modern astrology which proved that the smallest of the shining bodies of the sky might be millions of times bigger than our planet. It was, therefore, futile to imagine that there was relation between such bodies and man's movements and behaviour. Notwithstanding, astrologers still have great influence on the common man, not only in the East, but also in the most advanced communities of Europe and America. (2)

Worship of Creator Through His Creation:

The human mind did not leave any creature, alive or lifeless, small or big, on earth or in the sky, with-

(1) Surat Al-Anaam : 76-79 (The Cattle).
(2) Astrology and horoscopy, occupy, even now, permanent spaces in big world newspapers and journals.

out trying to see in it the divine secret, the omnipotent and the creator.

This may give us an idea of how this was the source from which learning and knowledge were derived. I have already mentioned that whatever simple early developments of man's mind seem to be in the present time, yet they were the basis on which our faith and knowledge were founded. We must not draw comparison among the deities of ancient beliefs. We must not think that whoever deified the cow, for instance, was more advanced than he who deified the dog. Nor was he who worshipped the fire or the mountain better than he who worshipped the calf or the crocodile. Similarly, it is not necessary for us to think that he who worshipped the sun was the best of all. Comparison cannot be drawn in this regard, because all these creatures were created by One Creator and all of them came under one category. Whether these creatures were big or small, they all had on them the mark of their creator. They are a sign of His omnipotence. Whenever man's mind contemplates any of these creatures, he will find himself looking face to face to the majesty and omnipotence of the Creator.

The Holy Quran exhorts the mind in tens of verses to contemplate every creature and element in the Universe. In order to show their standing, the Quran refers to them in the form of an oath. It says : «*By the sky and the night-visited (therein)*», (1) «*By the sun and its*

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(1) Surat Al-Tariq : 1 (The Night-Visitant).

(glorious) splendour; by the moon as it follows it». (1) «*By the star when it goes down*», (2) *By the fig and the olive*», (3) *By the (steeds) that run with panting (breath)*» (4) and «*By the (winds) sent forth one after another*», etc. etc... (5) When the human mind reached in its primitive stage the point of contemplating the various creatures and making attempts to discover their stratling secrets, man immediately submitted and worshipped them. In fact, man, through this creation, was worshipping though unknowingly, the omnipotence which had created all of them.

This stage of human thinking can be considered as a stage of worshipping the Creator through His creation.

The great Arab poet, the late Ahmad Shawki, had composed a poem on the subject which is rightly considered in the sphere of spiritualism a masterpiece. Its English rendering may be given as follows:

> O, Lord: For centuries peoples had lived in darkness, without sacred guiding books or prophets;
>
> They had deviated from the right course and lost sight of the big Truth;
>
> When they deified anything powerful, they had in fact deified Your power;

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(1) Surat Al-Shams : 1-2 (The Sun).
(2) Surat Al-Najm : 1 (The Star).
(3) Surat Al-Tin : 1 (The Fig).
(4) Surat Al-Adiyat : 1 (Those That Run).
(5) Surat Al-Mursalat : 1 (Those Sent Forth).

When they thought that a certain great thing was immune against imperfection, it was You Who granted this thing its greatness;

When they set up the idols, they were referring to You;

And when they deified the stars, because of their splendour, this greatness came from You;

And when they worshipped the plants, they actually worshipped Your favours and blessings;

And when they prostrated themselves before the mountains, they were visualising Your greatness and majesty;

When they worshipped the kings, it was You Who gave the kings their station and grace;

When they worshipped the seas with the fish, and the storms and the gales;

And the lions of heavens and of earth, and the wombs and the mothers and fathers;

They were worshipping in them only You, because all of these were nothing but Your servants;

Behind creation and virtue there is a secret which, when revealed, it will be illuminating.

CHAPTER 4

TOWARDS THE TRUTH

Re-Incarnation — Idolatry — Towards Monotheism — In Egypt — Ptah — The God Re — Amon — Imhotep the Fourth — Ikhnaton — Aton, the True God — The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful — Assassination of Ikhnaton — Transcendence of Amon — Monotheism in Greece — In Persia — In India.

Re-Incarnation:

The human mind pursued its endeavours to explore the great secret of deities after the experiences, facts and self-evident truths it attained over the years. Under the pressure of progressive social conditions, of evolution and of culture and civilisation, man was able to have more control over most of the natural elements and creatures. Man had feared only a few of these creatures, after discovering that they were working according to pre-meditated and fixed rules. Man had also discovered that through his intelligence these creatures could be made subservient and even killed by him.

This made human mind change its outlook to his various deities, whether they were animals, plants or minerals. To him, these were not gods, but images chosen by the gods to represent them on earth. Through these images gods would be able to associate themselves with the people in a way they would accept and give them the chance to get near and to worship them.

The bull Apis, for instance, with the white blaze on its fore-head, was not Ptah, the god, but the earthly representation of this god in which he had been re-incarnated in order to be able to come near to its devout believers. Like Ptah, all other gods had done the same. They had been re-incarnated in various shapes, without touching their substance or being subjected to material influences or defects.

The theory of re-incarnation spread all over the world in the second stage of intellectual development. The various material creatures became no more gods to be worshipped, but mundane personification.

Idolatry :

The theory of re-incarnation and god's desire to be personified in material images to be present in person among peoples led to the increase of the number of idols. By so doing, the gods wanted to help devout worshippers to worship them properly and encourage them to offer them sacrifices day and night.

Idolatry, through which man sought the pleasure of gods, was in fact a stage of mind's endeavours to attain maturity and perfection. In this stage, man's mind discontinued to take a certain creature as god and started to think of gods as having unlimited hidden powers. It was only out of passion towards human beings that the gods had been re-incarnated in idols. They wanted to keep themselves as near to them as possible.

Towards Monotheism :

While man's mind was thinking of transcendence of divinity, it was also contemplating monotheism and

trying to forsake the great multitude of gods and creative elements. However, the mind had come to know that for various parts there should always be something to control them. On the other part, stability, culture and cooperation among human beings brought the human mind nearer to the idea of monotheism. In the outset, peoples lived in tribes, each one separated from the other because of the lack of means of communications. Each community, or each tribe, imagined that the Universe was bound by the horizon beyond which no one could see anything. They believed that there was no gods in the Universe save those they had chosen for themselves. They thought that they were themselves the only people who got the privilege of god's protection and care. But when the various tribes contacted each other through peaceful cooperation, or even through armed clash, they came to know that there were worlds, peoples and deities other than theirs. Here, the idea of divinity started to be impregnated with other notions. The result was that these peoples began to look at various directions. In the annals of the development of human beliefs we can see how the gods of certain communities were related to gods of other communities through brotherhood, sonship or fatherhood, and how a god of certain people had married the goddess of another people. When an era of conquest and victories was opened, when a powerful leader dominated many other communities, tribes and peoples, the deities of the victorious had to enjoy more superiority and majesty over those of the vanquished. This led the human mind to conceive in the end a comprehensive and pure idea about divinity, which helped him to realise that there was a god who was superior to all other gods, and

a creator of all other deities on the top. In this stage, man arrived to monotheism.

In Egypt:

The ancient Egyptian society is unique in producing a picture of creation and development of various beliefs. This process started with the belief of the primitive man in sanctifying all creatures and natural elements surrounding him and ended with the belief of their savants and leaders in absolute monotheism.

Before the Egyptian history was chronicled, that is before the epoch of dynasties, Egypt was composed of many towns and provinces, each one independent from the other, and having its own deity. Besides the supreme local deity there was a number of other common deities which were worshipped here and there. Political factors and social conditions brought these deities closer to each other and gave certain gods superiority over others. In addition to the political factors, there was in Egypt a natural factor which played a great part in observing monotheism — the sun. The powerful and shining sun which had its effect on the life of every Egyptian, and even on his cultivation, and anything else in his entity, was worthy to be worshipped in more than a province, either in Upper Egypt or in Lower Egypt. The sun-god was called Horus.

Ptah:

Notwithstanding, the sun had not been considered in the country an official deity unless after politics and military victories had paved the way for this. This hap-

pened when Menes succeeded in uniting Upper Egypt with Lower Egypt and putting them under his power, making Memphis the capital of the country to which all the Egyptians swore allegiance and from which they received revelations and guidance. Here, the local god of Memphis was elevated and became the chief god of the state. It became the supreme deity after it had been confined only to Memphis. It was called Ptah, to which the bull Apis symbolised. Worship of this god continued to be the first among other Egyptian worships till later date.

In the history of Path, like in histories of other ancient gods, development had started from a pure material form and ended with a perfect image of god which did not differ from any other one of him.

In the beginning, Ptah was taken by its priests and people as the god of construction and industry for whose guidance in these fields all the inhabitants of his region solicited.

When Memphis became the capital of Egypt, the priests' outlook towards Ptah changed. He was made the chief of all workers and the last authority in construction work and industry, not only in the region, but in the entire world. Later, the priests went a little further. They attributed to him the power to create the Universe and other gods. They theorised that the movement, behaviour and all structures of human beings and gods were inspired by Ptah, the only creative and majestic god who when decreed an affair, he only ordered it to be, and it had to be.

The God Re:

For a certain period, the Ptah worship had eclipsed the sun worship. But as soon as the first dynasty collapsed, the priests of Ein Shams (Heliopolis) came out and started to preach the worship of the sun-god, Re, who was worshipped under this name only in their region. Soon, the kings of the second and third dynasties came under the priests' influence and when the fourth dynasty assumed power and Khufu (Chiops) completed the construction of his pyramid, the Re worship became dominant in the state and the name of Re was included among the other names of the dynasty's kings, such as Khafre (Chphren) — the sun ray —, and Menkure (Mykerinus). In the end, the priests of Ein Shams (Heliopolis) seized power, establishing the fifth and other succeeding dynasties, which called their kings officially the sons of the sun. The Re worship became the state worship. Temples for that purpose were built everywhere in the country, including Memphis itself, which was the birth-place of the god Ptah, where he was re-incarnated in the form of the bull Apis.

But supremacy of any god at that time did not mean the defeat and disappearance of others gods, but an attempt on the part of other gods to get themselves associated with the supreme god for their own survival. Osiris, the god-father, had represented Re's authority on earth before it went to the western world to sit in judgement among the dead and send them to their eternal abode, either in Paradise or in Hell.

Osiris represented the set sun. Horus, Osiris' son, who took power after defeating Set, the god of evil, was

considered another image of Re. He was called Horus-Re. Sobk, a crocodile-god, who was worshipped in many parts of both Upper and Lower Egypt as the god of life and growth, «because it was seen crouching amidst the grass and plant», had in turn associated itself with the sun. It was given the name of Sobk-Re. (1)

Amon :

The most important of all local gods which were associated with the sun for survival and attained later a far-aspiring position, was Amon, the god of Thebes. He was supposed to be the god Men, of Kift, god of fertility and progeny. When the Re worship spread and was established, Men, too, was obliged in his turn to associate himself with the sun. He was called Amon-Re, being another image of Re. This continued till the eighteenth dynasty came to power and its princes expelled the Hyksos from Egypt, thus, freeing the whole country from foreign domination which descreted the land, enraged the gods and violated the honour of the land. Under the leadership of Ahmas, the victorious armies of Thebes drove the vanquished enemy away from the Egyptian territories and invaded Syria. It was natural that Amon, the god of Thebes, the capital of the new kingdom, would be made the senior to all deities, not only in Egypt, but outside it also. It was under Amon's banners and protection that the armies of Thebes had attained the victories which startled the world of the time.

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(1) Till now, a number of Egyptian towns are still called after this ancient god. There are Sobk al-Dahhak, Sobk al-Talat and Sobk al-Ahad.

Henceforth, Amon became the official deity of Egypt. Its influence spread from the Euphrates in the north to the middle of the Sudan in the south. No other Egyptian deity had ever enjoyed such a status. Temples to worship him were erected everywhere in the Empire. For him, the greatest of temples of either the old or the new times, the Karnak of Thebes, was erected.

It was obvious that in such a stage of human thinking man's mind would, as usual, exalt Amon. His priests no more carved idols in which he would be re-incarnated or sarcophagi to be buried in. To them, Amon was not to live on earth, but in the heavens. In this regard, the priests of Amon had nothing more to do save to declare the abolition of all other gods and worships so that absolute monotheism would be observed. But this step was destined to be taken by Ikhnaton, who could rightly be considered the oldest prophet ever known by humanity and history.

Imhotep the Fourth :

Towards the end of the eighteenth dynasty, the authority of the priests of Amon and the great wealth which poured in the coffers of its temples and in the pockets of its priests were responsible for the Paraohs' wrath and indignation. The Pharaohs tried their best to eliminate such influence lest it would threaten their own position. It was customary that the adviser to the king should be the chief priest. But when Imhotep the Third took office, he cancelled this tradition and appointed as his prime minister one from outside the clergy. This, of course, was the beginning of a battle

between the throne and the church. The priests of Ein Shams (Heliopolis), who were second only to the priests of Amon, found in such a conflict their golden chance. They were eager to restore their prestige and reinstate the worship of Re and his dominance over Egypt. When Imhotep the Fourth ascended in his early age the throne after his father, the priests persuaded him to oppose the authority of the Amon priests and restore the worship of Re, the chief god. The priests of Ein Shams (Heliopolis) found in the boy-king good response and thought that he had finally surrendered to their demands. They thought that the king was on their side and that their power would soon be reinstated. They exhorted the boy-king to come to a decision and proclaim Re as super-god. But while listening to the Ein Shams priests, Imhotep the Fourth was actually contemplating something beyond their reasoning. He had finally found the truth which was unknown to the priests who cared for nothing in fact but to preserve and consolidate their position.

The meditative mind of Imhotep went beyond the various apellations of gods. He came to know that in this Universe there should be only one god, with no partners to be associated with him, who could not take a form, but would take the sun as a symbol. He abolished all other worships and felt that it was his duty to announce and preach the truth to the world. In the meantime, he preferred not to surprise the people with his new teachings abruptly, but gradually. He started with construction of a new temple in Thebes which was completely dedicated to the worship of Aton, one of the images of Re, the sun of the western horizon.

Ikhnaton or the Spirit of Aton:

To express his devotion to the new god, Imhotep changed his name to Ikhnaton, the spirit of Aton. This was sufficient to arouse the anger of the priests of Amon who saw in this action an under-estimation of the authority of Amon and, consequently, of theirs. Here, Ikhnaton felt the necessity of migration from Thebes to free himself completely from the influence of its priests and to keep himself away from living in such a heathen community where every stone referred to the majesty of Amon and his deep influence on the people. Ikhnaton left Thebes and moved down river, with the Nile, to the north where he had selected a new site for a new capital to be dedicated to the worship of the true god. He chose a place near Al-Balyanah, and there, he laid the foundation-stone of a nice city which was described by the princes of the time as the prettiest of all cities. Construction work began, and after a short time, the city's walls went high in the sky and decorated palaces for the royalty and suit were built.

Temple of Aton:

The corner-stone of the new city was undoubtedly the temple. Its design was self-indicative of Ikhnaton's great substitution in the world of belief and of his great spiritual eminence.

Till that time, the gods were represented to the people in a very ugly shape and the temples were built on that basis. It was taken into account that temples should be constructed in such a way that they would fill peoples' hearts with fear. Light had not been al-

lowed to enter the place except through small holes, and most of the place was enveloped with darkness. Ikhnaton's new temple was different from this. It was composed of a vast yard, open to the sun during the day, and lit by the stars in the night. In some of its parts there were sheds and rooms to accommodate the clergy and the temple's personnel. Excluding the altar, which was put in the middle of the yard, there was no idol or sacrophagus for the god. The temple was surrounded by gardens with nice roses and streams of water and ponds in which feathered birds, ducks and geese swam. The flowers, the birds, the water, the animals and the trees were supposed to be creatures which were to glorify the creative lord and praise his great work and offer him thanks for his favours.

Aton, the True God:

After establishing himself in his city, the king started to preach his new faith. Aton, he preached, was not a representation of Re, as its priests had believed, because Re meant only the solar disc. But the true Aton was deemed above any material form. It was the power which set the sun in motion and the force inherent in its heat, from which rays were beamed everywhere. Aton, in fact, was «the master of the sun». The word (Aton) was changed from its tangible significance to a synonym of the word (Nathr), meaning, the deity, or Allah, as it is called in Arabic.

Thus, Ikhnaton reached with his god the zenith of absolute monotheism. With this, he made the oldest and greatest revolution in ancient beliefs. Though Ikhnaton had illustrated Aton as a solar disc, spreading its rays

in the form of human hands coming from Providence, yet this was a mere expression of the great lord, the unseen, the one and the omnipotent. During his short life, Ikhnaton made a point to confirm to his disciples and followers that Aton was transcendent, with no physical or material form, the like of which «no one had ever known».

The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful:

Ikhnaton's perception of the truth was followed by a change of his approach to god. He stultified all concepts characterising god as cruel and firghtful. On the contrary, he described his god as gracious, merciful, kind and benevolent. God, Ikhnaton preached, was like the father who treated his sons kindly. He used to call god: «The father residing in heavens». He described him as «the master of love», who took care of the foetus in the mother's womb and soothed the child in order not to make him cry. Man was to come nearer to god, not through bloody clashes and wars, but through peace, order or amity. If one wanted to offer an oblation to god, it should not be done by shedding blood or slaughtering of cattle, but by burning incense, by sprinkling perfumes and by putting roses and tree branches on the altars. Whoever wanted to worship god should do that without any rites or complications, because god liked simplicity, not ceremony. God was hearing and near to everybody. Moreover, Ikhnaton himself was leading a life of simplicity. He disliked ceremonies, and, contrary to the traditions of former Pharaohs, mixed up with the masses and brought near him some persons who had never dreamed of even kissing his foothold. He was oc-

casionally seen in his chariot with his wife and children without guard or servants. He was an example of the good and kind husband and father and lord of the family. He doted on and revered the truth and considered it the noblest thing in existence. He called himself «the man living in truth» and appealed to everyone else to live, like himself, in the truth and for the truth. (1)

Ikhnaton's Hymns:

Nothing could display Ikhnaton's faith more than some of his hymns. They represent his true conviction and spirituality. They were especially composed to glorify Aton. Despite the fact that they were composed three thousand years ago, yet they still touch the heart of man because of the deep belief and sublime artistic element they include. It is to be noted that immediately after addressing the sun, Ikhnaton addressed the lord, the mover and creator of the sun.

The Splendour of Aton

Thy dawning is beautiful in the horizon of heavens,
O, living Aton, Beginning of Life!

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(1) The teachings of Ikhnaton had influenced the painters and sculptors of his epoch. For the first time in the history of the ancient Egyptian art, the artists tried to be honest in portraying nature. Unfamiliar pictures were made of Ikhnaton all of which had depicted him in his own character and nature. In them, we can detect even the illnesses from which he had suffered. For the first time also, the Pharoah was seen in the pictures either lying down or in relaxation.

When thou risest in the eastern horizon of heaven,
Thou fillest every land with thy beauty ;

For thou are beautiful, great, glittering, high over the earth ;

Thy rays, they encompass the lands, even all thou hast made.

Though thou art afar, thy rays are on earth ;
Though thou art on high, thy footprints are the day.

Day and the Animals and Plants

All cattle rest upon their herbage,
All trees and plants flourish,
The birds flutter in their marshes,
Their wings uplifted in adoration to thee,
All the sheep dance upon their feet,
All winged things fly,
They live when thou hast shore upon them.

Day and the Life

The barques sail up-stream and down-stream alike.
Every highway is open because thou hast dawned.
The fish in the river leap up before thee,
And thy rays are in the midst of the great sea.

Creation of Man

Thou art he who createst the man-child in woman,
Who makest seed in man,
Who giveth life to the son in the body of his mother,
Who soothest him that he may not weep,

A nurse (even) in the womb.
Who giveth breath to animate every one that he
 maketh.
When he cometh forth from the body,
....on the day of his birth,

Thou opened his mouth in speech,
Thou suppliest his necessities.

Creation of Animals

When the chicklet crieth in the egg-shell,
Thou givest him breath therein, to preserve him
 alive.
When thou hast perfected him
That he may pierce the egg,

He cometh forth from the egg,
To chirp with all his might;
He runneth about upon his two feet,
When he hath come forth therefrom.

The Whole Creation

How manifold are all thy works!
They are hidden from before us,
O, thou sole god, whose powers no other possesseth.
Thou didst create the earth according to thy desire.
While thou wast alone:

Men, all cattle, large and small,
All that are on high,
That fly with their wings.
The countries of Syria and Nubia,
The land of Egypt;
Thou settest every man in his place,

Thou suppliest their necessities.
Every one has his possessions,
And his days are reckoned.
Their tongues are diverse in speech,
Their forms likewise and their skins,
For thou divider, hast divided the peoples.

The Seasons

Thou makest the seasons, in order to create all thy works:
Winter bringing them coolness,
And the heat (of summer likewise).
Thou hast made the distant heaven to rise therein,
In order to behold all that thou didst make,
While thou wast alone,
Rising in thy form as living Aton,
Dawning, shining afar off and returning.

Beauty Due to Light

Thou makest beauty of form, through thyself alone.
Cities, towns and settlements,
On highway or on river,
All eyes see thee before them,
For thou art Aton of the day over the earth.

Revelation to the King

Thou art in my heart,
There is no other that knoweth thee,
Save thy son Ikhnaton.
Thou hast made him wise in thy design
And in thy might.

The world is in thy hand,
Even as thou hast made them.
When thou hast risen, they live;
When thou settest, they die.
For thou art duration, beyond thy mere limbs,
By thee man liveth.

Fighting of Idolatry:

Nothing remained for Ikhnaton to make monotheism complete than to abolish the ancient deities foremost among which was Amon, the symbol of old paganism. He wanted that on earth there should not be save one worship, the worship of god, the one, to whom no other partner would be ascribed.

When he was 21 years old, he decided to do away with the priests' authority. He confiscated their property and banned any kind of worship or prayers offered to other than Aton. He turned all temples to the worship of Aton only. Those which could not be changed to serve the purpose were either demolished or abandoned. He also issued orders to the effect that the name of Amon, together with names of other gods, be erased from all monuments. Even the name of his father Imhotep was removed because it comprised the name of Amon. With such fervour he went on consolidating his new call. Even his love and respect for his father could not stop him from doing so. Till now, the Egyptian antiquities show the traces of the rebellion against the name of Amon and other deities. Their names are erased, including that of Imhotep the Fourth.

Thus, the Aton worship had become the only official and authorised worship practised not only in the Egyptian kingdom, but also in other parts of the empire. No ceremonies or prayers were allowed save those devoted to the one god with whom no other deity had been associated.

Assassination of Ikhnaton :

So, a sparkle of monotheism had flashed more than twenty centuries before the appearance of Prophet Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him. This denotes that Ikhnaton had lived beyond his time. He lived at a time when the human mind was not so mature as to accept full and absolute monotheism and abandon the idea of re-incarnation, of anthropomorphism and of building up of idols. It is noticed that till now, the majority of people still adhere to the notion that worship cannot be made except through religious rites, through the spirits, the graves, the dead bodies and the idols. It was not surprising then that as soon as Ikhnaton was assassinated and disappeared from the scene of events, his call faded and the priests of Amon restored their authority. At that time, Egypt's military might weakened as a result of Ikhnaton's peaceful principles and of his call for establishing world peace which, unfortunately, had not been attained till now. As a consequence, the security of the Egyptian empire was threatened and rebellions and civil strifes took place everywhere. Tut Ankh Amon, Ikhnaton's successor, was obliged to return to Thebes, to discontinue worshipping

Aton, and to change the word (Aton), which was included in his name, to Amon.

Transcendence and Unity of Amon:

But the good ideas never die. Ikhnaton's notions about monotheism had become familiar and it was not possible for them to vanquish easily or for the appreciative human mind to forfeit them. It is the nature of mind to grow and look forward, not backward. Amon was regarded exactly as Aton was viewed by Ikhnaton. He became the god, the one, with whom no other god was associated, the transcendent. To him were ascribed all the good attributes of a true god. The setback which occurred after the death of Ikhnaton was not in replacement of the name of Aton by that of Amon, but in the return of the masses to worship the great multitude of deities which was banned previously by Ikhnaton. The masses may be the only people who in all times will not understand monotheism correctly. They continue to adhere to misconceptions and worship of idols.

The Greek Society:

The developments which took place in Egypt had occurred in Greece, not only in the same way, but rather in a more advanced manner. These developments were achieved through pure philosophy and free thinking.

A thousand years before Christ, Homer, in the Iliad, and Hesiod, the poet, talked about a multitude of Greek gods who possessed powers resembling those of the natural elements they had represented. These gods were identical to man in everything, not only in shape, but

in character and manners, even in vices too. Gods, like human beings, could harbour hatred and covetousness, conspire and plot, speak ill or fall in love with others, marry and produce children, and even commit adultery with others' wives. The only difference which distinguished gods from human beings, as mentioned in the Iliad, was that the gods were immortal, and that in their veins ran divine blood, not human blood. Excepting this, the gods were similar to human beings.

But soon the Greek mentality progressed. Some particular gods won the reverence of the whole Greek nation and got the privilege of being superior to other deities. Among those which were elevated to a high level were Zeus, the father of the Olympus and of all other gods, Apollo, god of Delphi and lord of heavens, and Athens, goddess of wisdom and protector of the city of Athens. Since Zeus was the father and president of the gods' assembly when in session, he enjoyed power which was increased by the passage of time. All the Greek arts, sculptures, paintings, serenades and poetry, had contributed in unision to prove Zeus' superiority over other gods. When the golden epoch of the Greek mind prevailed on Greece in the fourth and fifth centuries B.C., Zeus was intermittently referred to as the one god, with whom no partner had been associated, though the ancient gods had still been held in esteem. The idea of absolute monotheism and transcendence made its appearance through different philosophers and sages. Xenophanes, founder of the Eleatic school, took himself to fighting polytheism as no reformer or prophet had ever done before. He called for the transcendence of gods and condemned the popular beliefs and miscon-

ceptions which did not go side by side with the unity and majesty of divinity. Xenophanes used to say that people had done injustice to god and that everyone had portrayed him according to his imagination. The negroes portrayed the gods as having black hair and as being snub-nosed, while the Thracians saw them as having blue eyes and golden hair. Xenophanes continues to say that had the horses and cows been able to portray god, they would have certainly portrayed him as a horse or a cow. On this basis, human beings had portrayed god as a man. Not only that; they ascribed to the gods man's vices too. Among those people were Homer and Hesiod. In fact, this contradicts strongly the transcendence which is indespensable to god. God can never be given the attributes of human beings, and in order to preserve the sacredness of divinity, we must consider it far above what is mean. Xenophanes adds that since god is perfection, he must be one, because the status of gods does not allow them to be subjugated to anything. Moreover, the gods are in no need to have servants and followers. Therefore, there should be no chief god, with gods under or beside him. There should be only one god.

Beside attributing to god oneoness and transcendence, Xenophanes credited him with oldness and eternity. He says that god existed when no one else had existed before. Everything that occurs must pass away, and passing away of the self does not suit god. Therefore God is old. He also says that god never changes because he is the absolute permanence. Any change will be for the worst, and this is contrary to divinity.

The Greek philosophy went on in its startling deve-

lopment trying to perceive the creator of this Universe. Outstanding conclusions in this respect were made by Socrates' disciples, Plato and Aristotle. The former proved that it was God Who created this Universe and that He was the supreme excellence Who have within Him absolute goodness and benevolence. As regards the latter, Arisotle, he proved by clear and conclusive arguments that God is self-existent, One, Old and unchangeable. The Muslims, who came a thousand years after Aristotle, had so admired him that they called him the first instructor. They used his arguments to prove by logic Allah's unity and other divine attributions.

Monotheism in Persia :

Persians, as already stated, had two eternal gods, the first, the god of goodness (Ahuramazda), and the other, the god of evil (Ahriman). Both gods were treated on the same footing. But soon, this dual belief developed and in the days of the Sassanians was modified. Ahriman's authority, the god of evil, had become limited and restricted to only nine thousand years after which time he would pass away, leaving behind him Mazda, the god of goodness, the living, the eternal. This belief, in general, is identical to the picture the Holy Quran gives of Iblis, the Satan, when he rebelled against God and asked Him to grant him a respite till he would be able to persuade all His devout believers to evil.

Monotheism in India :

The Indians' sacred books, the Vidas, speak of 330,000 deities, and sometimes, of 333 only. As in other

similar communities, evolution in India had started with the intermittent superiority of some of these gods and ended with making Brahma the chief god and the sole deity with whom no partner had been associated. He did not resemble any of his creatures. As having been described in the Vidas, «Brahma, being unlike this or that, stands unique, and, therefore, it is absolute. In him is inherent the idea of self-existent world. He is infinite. He neither moves nor is he defined. He is beyond any imagination or perception. He does not speak in words or think through fancies or reflections. He does not see through eyes or hear with ears or breathe by inhalation. He is the creature who took away from himself all the elements of evil. He never becomes decrepit; he is the living who does not pass away. He never feels hungry, thirsty, or grieved. He is Brahma whom everyone must know».

The last quotation from the Vidas is identical to the Quranic verse, «*God! There is no god but He, the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep*».

CHAPTER 5

GOD'S PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS

Prophets — Prophets Trials — Legality of Opposing New Beliefs — Muhammadan Revelation — Revelation — Spread of the Call — Life of Great Peoples and its Inter-Relations with Society — Napoleon — Aristotle — Alexander the Macedonian —Science's Failure to Interpret Muhammad's Revolution — Muhammadan Revolution — Muhammad Guided by Revelation — Quraish's Interpretation of Revelation — Denial of Revelation Leads to Deification of Muhammad.

Man's conscience, as already stated, had reached in various communities a stage where it started to observe monotheism. Nevertheless, there was a step left behind which had not been taken by various peoples to make the idea of the Unity of God universal. They had to believe that there was one God, the creative, the eternal and the dominant and controller of all peoples, irrespective of their colours, races and environments. Till then, monotheism was observed only within a limited regional sphere where the deity had been given a national character. The Egyptians had unanimously agreed that Amon was the chief god and the creator and lord of the Universe. They denied that Marduk, the chief god of the Assyrians and Babylonians, was in turn the master and creator of Universe, rather the orb of Amon,

Egypt's god. The Greek, on the other hand, knew no gods but Zeus who dwelt in the Olympus. Each nation was proud of its deity, considering it the greatest of all its national emblems. It was then imminent that there should be a movement, or a call, to prove to the world that the Truth was indivisible, that the creator and master of the Universe was, as believed by everybody, the One God with Whom no partner was associated, and that the Universe was not composed only of Egypt and its empire, or of Assyria and Babylon and their kingdom, or of India, of China or of Greece, but of all of them together, and also of the other world and of the skies and earth. The result was that each people had to efface the names they gave to the creator of the heavens and earth, as they had imagined, and to refrain from conceiving him in different forms. They had to think of him as transcendent, having no physical form nor related to time or place. They had to believe in one god to him everyone had to submit and approach by sophistication and good deeds.

The Prophets:

In this stage of human mind's revolution, some prominent persons were chosen to lead the humanity towards the absolute Truth. These men were neither kings, sultans, conquerors, theologians nor sextons. Nor had they been great scholars, unmatched philosophers, or gifted sages, but ordinary people who had received no education nor possessed any wealth or power. Nevertheless, these people, who were in some cases poor, illiterate and powerless, had acquired power and authority which dwarfed those of the kings, the priests and

the scholars. They had prevailed and influenced peoples' minds and souls, not only during their life-time, but also in later years and generations. All peoples, irrespective of their races, colours, and languages, had to believe in what they had asked them to believe in. These people had to discharge the duties they had been entrusted with, without any disputation or weariness, but in complete submission. These prominent persons were God's prophets and messengers. (1)

Prophets' Trials :

The way before these prophets and messengers was not paved and it was not easy for them to propagate their teachings without difficulties. On the contrary, wherever they had gone, their reformatory ideas about faith were met with violent storms of disapproval. They had suffered a lot at the hands of all factions of their peoples. The first to fight them were the doctors of religions who did not approve that someone else from outside their ranks would pretend to have been chosen by God to deliver His message and guide the people to the right path. They had opposed and fought the prophets because they derived their influence on both the commoners and the kings from their allegation that it was they alone who had communion with God By Him, they were regarded with marked preference. As regards the kings and the ruling parties, they fought the prophets because they saw in their calls a danger threatening them as well as their authority. They opined

(1) Messengers are the prophets who left behind them holy books, such as the Gospel and the Quran.

that any call for monotheism and for equality of all peoples was certainly conductive to the establishment of democracy and the result would be that the authority and power of the kings and the aristocracy would dwindle and vanish. Not only that; other people with little learning, intellect or philosophy, had also fought the prophets and messengers. It was natural, moreover, that the apostates who completely denied the existence of god to be among the first people who defied the prophets and branded them with imposition and deceipt. As regards those who believed that there was really a god, they did not like the prophet to be so poor and powerless so as to be persecuted, without having any supporter or protector on his side. They thought that a prophet must be powerful, able to subjugate all peoples and make them obey him without hesitation or discussion. The last to fight the prophets and messengers were the commoners. They thought that the theme of prophets' calls had concentrated on stultifying their dreams and notions, trying to expose their ignorance. They opined that the prophets, in this case, were obliged to attack their beliefs and, sacred deities. Since nothing could torment man except an attack on his faith, the commoners, naturally, had become the arch-enemies of prophets and messengers. The commoners were of great help to the priests and men of authority in their attempts to suppress and defeat the calls of prophets and messengers. They had even exceeded the limit when they tried to kill them with their supporters whenever the opportunity arose.

This was the prophets' trial. But such a trial was necessary for ascertaining the authenticity of every pro-

phethood. The experiment was a confirmation of the prophets' and messengers' truthfulness, for no one could pass the trial and overcome persecution except those who were faithful and sincere.

Legality of Opposing New Beliefs:

Under no circumstances must we express surprise or blame those who had opposed in the beginning those who feigned prophethood and pretended to have communion with god and received from him a revelation in whatever form it was. Any community's or nation's maturity cannot be measured except by the extent of its awareness and persistence to defend its beliefs and traditions until such a time when it becomes able to discover the truth of the new principles. Truth cannot be reached unless after eradicating ancient falsehood. Otherwise, what would happen if the people had to believe any croaker. liar or pretender who did not stand criticism or trial? What would happen if the people would believe anyone who pretended to have received revelation from the Lord of the Universe and that he would deliver to them what would turn their beliefs upside down? Would not the society become in such a case disturbed by instability of faith and legislation? Without such relative stability any society cannot be set up or develop. What would have happened in Arabia and even in the whole world, if the Arabs had been induced after the death of Prophet Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, to obey the pretenders of prophethood who announced publicly that they also had received God's revelation? Not were all the pretenders males, but females too. Besides

Musaylamah and Tolyhah, the males, there was also Sajah, a female. If such pretenders were to be left unopposed, not only had Arabia to go back to chaos and paganism, with its spiritual and political unity achieved under Islam disrupted, but the noble Muhammadan Call would have also been subdued, with its light put off, and the whole world deprived of its blessings. It was then natural that Muhammad's successor and friend, Abou Bakr, would attack and repel these new calls and their originators. Had he not done so, he would have been neglecting and betraying the trust and showing indifference in the preservation of the great Islamic legacy. To fight any pretender of prophethood, or anyone else who feigned to possess a particular authority or tutelage, was not only a right of the people, but a duty which they had to do if they had wanted to preserve their entity and free themselves from pretenders of prophethood, liars, imposters and swindlers. Had such a pretender been a true prophet or messenger, he should not have feared such an attitude from his community because his faithfulness and truthfulness would have been able to overcome all reactionary elements. The obstacles and persecution he had to face would have easily been overcome by his strong faith and the righteousness of his teachings and principles. If such a man could establish new beliefs and teachings in the souls of his people, either during his lifetime or after his death, he would have given the proof that he was not an ordinary person. Had he been an ordinary man, he would not have reached such a position. Therefore, he must have been right in what he had professed.

I think this is the proof by which we, the later generations, can judge the truthfulness of any old call. Every

society, in any time, had seen such people who pretended to be in communion with the Lord of the Universe. Such people pretend to have the right of tutelage over others, of being holy and able to *make* miracles. Everywhere, and in all times, there were shrewd swindlers who could induce people by various means and make them subservient to them. In the ancient communities, there was a number of persons who seized power and subjugated peoples by force. These peoples became their slaves. They revered them, abandoning God, the One, the Supreme. Not only that; they imagined that such persons were in fact living representations of god. Such was the case of the Pharaohs of Egypt and the Caesars of Rome and the present Emperor of Japan. All of these were venerated by their peoples. However, from among the big multitude of such people who enjoyed all kinds of power and authority, there were none but one Buddha, one Moses, one Jesus and one Muhammad. These were the prophets who dominated the world spiritually, to whose teachings peoples had submitted. No one other than these prophets had won the reverence of all mankind.

Muhammad, Son of Abdullah:

The history of our Master Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, is the only authenticated and confirmed among the histories of other prophets. It could be easily studied scientifically. It is a good example of the truthfulness of all prophets.

The truthfulness of the prophethood of our Master Muhammad and his mission is a confirmation of the prophethood of all former prophets and messengers. To

deny Muhammad's prophethood is a denial of all other religions.

Muhammadan Revelation:

In 570 A.D., Muhammad, son of Abdullah, (1) was born in Mecca, then a village in the heart of the desert

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(1) Unlike any other famous man in history, Muhammad, son of Abdullah, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, is unique in having a record which cannot be disputed or held in doubt. All the big events which took place during his life-time, from birth to death, had been unanimously agreed to by Muslim and non-Muslim historians, ancient and modern. Some of the critics of the present time deny the existense of all historical Figures. To them, the Messiah for instance, had not existed at all, because no reference to him had been made in the history of the world. Even the Jewish history, in particular, had not mentioned him though his existence was considered to be a milestone in general history. Only the Gospels had talked of him, albeit with contradictions. But still, the Gospels do not give a clear picture of him. They only depict him in a vague picture which makes one belive that the Messiah was nothing but an old myth which appeared in the Christian era. Endorsing their allegation, the critics refer to similar legends which were incorporated in the Indian and ancient Babylonian beliefs. Not only had the existence of religious personalities been denied, but also that of some historical figures like Homer, the author of the Iliad and Odyssey. Some people say that he had never existed, being only a myth. Even in recent years, some of the figures which were famous in history had been rejected as non-existent, like Joan of Arch. Shakespeare is said to have not been the author of his immortal works. Some people say that he was the ghost behind which a great poet of the time had hidden himself to be able to publicise his ideas and publish his plays. Though all the famous personalities of history had been so denied, yet the personality of Mu-hammad, the Arab Prophet, is excluded and had not been so treated. The traces of his life are recorded in the annals of existence in letters of resplendence. His impact is felt on the hundred millions who not only believe in his existence and follow his teachings, but imitate his actions and abide by his sayings and traditions. They go to his birth-place to pay respect and perform pilgrimage. They also visit his grave, pass through the roads which he used to cross, stand in places where he had stood, utter the =

which was surrounded from all sides by hills. His father died when he was still in his mother's womb. He came to the world an orphan — poor and without supporter. A short time after giving birth, the mother died, and thus, the child was deprived since his early life of the compassion and kindness of both the father and the mother. But he was recompensated with his grandfather's Abdel Muttalib, benevolence and the commiseration of his beduin wet-nurse Halimah al-Saadiyah. When his grandfather died, his uncle Abou Talib took charge of him, granting him all the pity and love. Like any other child reared in the barren desert, Muhammad worked in pasturage, raising cattle and attending to caravans. He was brought up in a place which did not witness any civilisation or culture, and, of course, did not acquire any learning or education. It is an established fact that this child had led the normal life of the day. A number of years of his life had passed without any significant incident except that of his marriage to a distinguished lady from the Quraish tribe. She was older than him and possessed a big fortune. Excluding this event, which might be considered as usual, Muhammad, son of Abdullah, spent the years as anyone

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= same words he had spoken, and drink from the spring he used to drink from. This is done incessantly. It started from the day Muhammad had delivered his message without even an hour breach. Muhammad's existence is also confirmed by the Muslims military conquests which were made a few years after the Hijrah (Migration) and by the international treaties concluded between his direct successors and the Christians, the Romans and the Persians. In this regard, Emile Deremenghem, author of (Life of Muhammad), says that no one, even the most pedant critic, can doubt or deny the existence of Muhammad.

else who happened to marry a virtuous wife. It was a common life in all its aspects. She bore him a number of boys and girls, some of them had died as any other people's sons had died, and some of them survived as any other people's sons had survived.

Life was spent in this way till Muhammad became forty years old. During this time, he had done nothing miraculous or unfamiliar. Though he was known to be truthful and honest, these were the ordinary qualities of his primitive community whose one of its virtues and common characteristics was truthfulness. In fact, Muhammad had spent two thirds of his life without being noticed by history. He had no ambition in any unusual future like which any other youth would aspire. Like any other citizen, he was far from being desirous of acquiring education. Only a quite few had acquired this. History's records show that he, unlike other Arabs, did not entertain any idea of aspiring to any mastery over his countrymen. Though he lived in a community all members of which were gifted with the art of poetry, and though he had lived among clever horsemen, yet he had never been known to have composed a poem or been counted as a horseman. He was simple and ordinary. He inhabited a recondite place and lived among people who were hardly known to the outer world because of their poverty, ignorance and weightlessness. No conqueror had planned to invade this desert which lived for long on the margin of civilisation and culture.

Revolution :

A man like Muhammad, who had spent two thirds of his age isolated from the whirl of life and left behind

him youthhood with its ardour, precipitance, fancies and adventures, was expected to enter a new stage of manhood where there would be no place for excitement and where reason would prevail with calmness and wisdom, dispersing dreams and fancies and confronting the realities of life. But Muhammad was an exception. Unexpectedly, and behind this suddenness lay all the secrets, he was changed into an erupting volcano which discharged its lava, obliterating falsehood, corruption and sin, in which his countrymen were involved. He declared a merciless war on his people's beliefs, superstitions, traditions, customs, and way of life and thinking. Meantime, he started to guide them to the path of righteousness, goodness and perfection.

Spread of the Call:

Soon, Arabia was flooded with the new light whose rays were beamed everywhere. Muhammad contacted the kings and emperors of the world asking them to come to righteousness, promising them the Paradise if they believed in his message, and warning them of chastisement if they disbelieved him. This action had terrified the Arabs. Muhammad's letters to the kings were not mere words, because soon after rejecting his offer, he despatched his armies to beyond the borders of Arabia, challenging the most powerful armies ever known at that time. Shortly after his death, his disciples continued the work he had started, and with the faith he had imbued in their hearts, they swept off the east and the west. A century after, more than one hundred million peoples had embraced the religion brought by the illiterate Arab, who came from the heart of the desert of Arabia.

Today, and after more than one thousand and three hundred years from the Prophet's Hijrah (Migration) to Medina, we find that the number of his followers has exceeded three hundred million, all of them believe in his mission and religion. The number of the Muslims is on the increase day after day, even hour after hour. (1) The spirit and teachings of Muhammad are potent and full of vigour and light and piousness. Such a thing did not happen either in the old or in the recent history. What interpretation can be given by the sciences and historical and psycho-analysis of the revolution which had started by Muhammad and later spread over the whole of Arabia and then over the entire world ?

Life of Great Peoples and its Inter-Relation with Society :

Modern sciences demonstrate, rightly, that any great man was nothing but a natural product of the numerous factors which influenced and moulded him from birth to death. Heredity, instruction, and the society in which he lived, not excluding his own intelligence and genius, are the factors which lie behind the accomplishments and behaviour of each great man.

Napoleon :

Though Napoleon is regarded by the present time an example of the heroes who made miracles, yet anyone who reads his history since his birth, and that of

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(1) These fugures were taken from the statistics of twenty years back. Now, the Muslims number more than five hundred million.

France, will immediately realise that had not been for the prevailing circumstances, he would not have been able to achieve his accomplishments. He had inherited from his father ambition and rebellion, and since his boyhood, he had been dreaming of liberating his homeland, Corsica, from France's domination and of establishing an independent state on which he would preside. When he was given the chance of joining the military college in France, he did his best to acquire the maximum of learning. To achieve this goal, he immersed himself deeply in reading books. Though he was a small student, yet he was interested in the biographies of great people like Alexander, Hanibal, Julius Caesar and Fredrick the Great. He used to study the maps and charts and battles carefully. He hoped to have a bright future of his own making. He looked down upon his colleagues in the college as if he was a unique person.

At that time, France was the scene for the most remarkable events known in present history. It was trying to demolish an ancient society and re-build a new one. It beheaded its kings, princes and nobles and called for a new religion and life of freedom, fraternity and equality. When Napoleon later took the world in surprise by his new military plans, in which the old armies were defeated, he had been deriving inspiration from the revolution that had turned everything upside down. Similarly, Napoleon's great victories over the allied armies had not been achieved except through the high morale which prevailed over everything there at that time. Had not the revolution won the battle of Valmy, Napoleon would not have survived or been able to win more battles and victories. Without Jean Jacques

Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquiou, the Declaration of Human Rights, and the Revolutionary Laws, Napoleon could not have been able to enact his laws and introduce administrative systems and social reforms. Therefore, Napoleon was nothing but a natural product of the French Revolution. This is supported by the fact that as soon as Napoleon had become undutiful towards the Revolution and rebelled against its principles, installing himself an emperor and making of his commanders and lackeys nobles, he, together with the French people who lost confidence in him, fell down. In the end, Napoleon was exiled and the monarchy re-instated in France.

Aristotle :

Aristotle remained the centre of learning for two thousand years. The entire humanity did not find much to add to his works on logic. Nevertheless, he was nothing but a product of the Greek mentality which reached its zenith during his life-time. Aristotle, lastly, is a student of Plato. Without Plato and Socrates, his tutor, and the other successive philosophers, Aristotle would not have been able to occupy his place of eminence in the world of learning and knowledge. Aristotle, in fact, was a ripe fruit of the ancient Hellenic philosophy.

Alexander the Macedonian :

Alexander the Macedonian, on the other hand, is not difficult to be analysed scientifically. He was the apex of the refined Greek life which was to influence the whole world. Alexander was the son of Phillipe, the Macedonian lion, who had subjugated all the Greek states. He also was a student of Aristotle, the greatest

of all minds ever known in the world. The soldiers of Alexander were the Greeks who treated athletics, horsemanship and heroism as sacred duties. If Alexander had defeated the Persians, the same had happened before when small numbers of Spartans defeated the huge armies of Persia. On many occasions, the small ships of Greece had defeated the huge fleets of Persia.

Though Alexander is regarded the hero of heroes, yet he was pushed in all his accomplishments by the then prevailing conditions and factors.

Sciences' Failure to Interpret the Muhammadan Revolution:

Modern sciences, with their power of analysis, can interpret the success and pre-eminence of any great man. Moreover, they can discover the causes which raised any state or community from the depth of degradation to the height of civilisation and trace the circumstances and conjunctures which led to its progress. By the science also, it could be seen why a certain revolution had been staged, why it had succeeded or failed, and why a certain war had been won, while another was lost. Such analyses are made according to unchangeable natural and social theories and rules. Nevertheless, historical analysis and scientific interpretation had failed to expound the revolution which occurred in the heart of Muhammad, son of Abdullah, and the subsequent revolutions which moved and influenced the hearts of all the Arabs who had been in close contact with Muhammad, thus, bringing off the marvellous revolution which swept over the Arab peninsula.

History can never claim that Muhammad was born with an aspiration for any place of distinction or for kingship.

History cannot also maintain that he was educated, or skilled in horsemanship or in theology and religionism. He had never studied law or legislation. History cannot claim that, for a very simple reason. In the community in which he was reared, there was no kingship, and, consequently, no ambition to realise in this regard. The then society was composed of a tribe which was ruled by a shaikh (leader). The vast desert had many tribes. Similarly, there were neither sciences nor legislation, but tribal traditions, some of which were primitive, resembling those of any other primitive community. Muhammad's community had not even professed a religion with rules, teachings, priests, temples or theology. There were only some idols which were scattered here and there, which were sometimes glorified by the Arabs, and some other times defamed, if matters did not fare well.

Again, history cannot claim that Arabia was flourishing before the Muhammadan revolution; that the impulses of advancement were latent there; and that hopes in conquest were contemplated. Moreover, history cannot claim that 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, the unmannerly, the rude, the merciless man, who got up to the neck day and night in drinks, would have been preparing himself to become the emperor of the ancient world. No one had known that he would change to a very kind and compassionate man, who would weep on seeing a hungry child or a wounded soldier.

Similarly, history cannot claim that Khalid Ibn Al-Walid, the Arab youth who, like other Arab youngmen who had spent all their life in the desert, was pre-

paring himself to become one day the commander of an army before which the armies of the Romans and the Persians fled with fear and panic.

History also cannot say that 'Amr Ibn Al-'Ass had prepared himself to invade Egypt and become its ruler.

History can never claim anything of this sort, because thirteen years before Muhammad's Hijrah (Migration), the Quraish tribe, like any other Arab tribe, did not aspire save to get its substance and defend its security. They knew the world as something full of sand, with some herbage and springs in some parts, on which the people subsisted.

Then Came Muhammad's Revolution:

Muhammad Ibn Abdullah, who was known among his countrymen for his truthfulness and faithfulness, a fact which was confirmed by various events and circumstances, used to go into recess in a certain place. On one occasion, while he was in his retirement, he heard out of a sudden a voice rending the stillness of the place and saw a light which dispelled darkness. Muhammad, a human being, was terrified because he was aware that this place of retirement had always been quiet, with no voice or light whatsoever. When he regained his self, he noticed that the voice which is the beginning resembled a chime of a gell had become soft and clear. The voice ordered him to «*Read in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created — created man out of a (mere) sperm, of congealed blood. Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful, He Who taught (the use of) the pen, taught man that which he knew not*». Then,

the voice disappeared, but Muhammad was still over-strained, with sweat exuded from his forehead. But at that time, his heart was throbbing with a new life and a new light. Muhammad did not know that this was an indication of a Revelation sent by the Lord of the Universe and that he was destined to become the commander of all peoples. (1) Collecting his composure, he

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(1) The two Imams, Al-Bukhari and Moslem, quote Aisha, may God be pleased with her, as having said that the first time the Revelation came to God's Prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, was in the form of visions which he had seen in his sleep. She said that not a single dream had not come true. Later, he liked to stay in solitary and for this reason he frequented the cave of Hira where he used to perform religious services in certain nights. When the food he used to take with him was finished, he would return home to Khadijah to get more food for another period of retirement. Once, when he was inside the cave, the Revelation came suddenly and ordered him to read. But Muhammad refused to do so. Muhammad was quoted as saying: «The Revelation pressed me to his breast until I became exhausted. Then he released me, ordering me to read, but I refused to read. He pressed me again to his breast and then released me, ordering me, "Read in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, who created — created man out of a (mere) sperm, of congealed blood. Proclaim ! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful." "The Prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, returned to his house trembling. There, he said to Khadijah, daughter of Khuwaylid: "Cover me; cover me." She covered him and he remained so until he was reassured. Then he told his wife of what had happened, adding that he feared that something might happen to him. Khadijah replied : «By God, He will never abase you, because you look after your kith and kin, help the weak and the poor, show hospitality to the guest, and extend assistance in cases of misfortunes.» Then she took him to her cousin Warqah Ibn Nofal Ibn Asad Ibn Abdul Uzzah, who had converted to Christianity in pre-Islamic days. Warqah was old, blind and well-versed in Hebrew. He was able to translate the Gospel into that language. Khadijah said : O, Cousin; hear what your nephew will tell. Warqah said : What is the matter, nephew? The Prophet told him the story. Then Warqah said : It was the same revelation that was sent by God to Moses.

hurried to his wife Khadijah trembling. He told her of what had happened. When he became calm, Khadijah took him to an adviser who added to his tranquility. When the Revelation came again to Muhammad, he received it with great certainty and was reassured that he had received from the heavens a message that he had to deliver to all mankind, starting with his kith and kin. He knew that what had filled his heart and that what he had to preach was righteousness and goodness.

Muhammad Guided by Revelation:

The Revelation continued to come to Muhammad Ibn Abdullah for twenty three years. He was guided and inspired by it. Sometimes, the Revelation would order him to be patient and endure the sufferings, and some other times to unsheath the sword. It ordered him to be lenient sometimes, and sometimes to declare war for which he had been promised victory. Often, the Revelation had revealed to him the secrets of the invisible world. He had never let him down or told him a lie. The Revelation had supported him all the time until the whole of the peninsula of Arabia had surrendered to him after violent opposition. He had struggled without being armed or assisted except by the truthful Revelation.

Muhammad was promised by the Revelation protection against the peopie. The Quran said: «*And God will defend thee from men (who mean mischief)*». (1) And the promise was fulfilled. After delivering his message wholly and completely, Muhammad died in his bed

(1) Surat Al-Ma'idah : 67 (The Table Spread)

despite the numerous plots against his life and the battles he had fought. The Revelation had also promised him God's vindication against the adherents of all the religions. Before his death, the last idol in the vast country was toppled down and destroyed. Similarly, Muhammad was told that his religion would prevail over all other religions. Before his death, Muslims from all over Arabia assembled at his last farewell pilgrimage to praise and magnify God, declaring that there was no God but Allah. At that time, the Revelation had told him, delivering a message from God, «*This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion*». (1) When the message was completed, Muhammad died after being informed by the truthful and faithful Revelation that his devout followers, who constituted a minority, would soon rule over the whole world. «*God has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion*». (2)

All the promises made to Muhammad by the Revelation were fulfilled. The Prophet, then, had to believe in it and presume that he had really been his Lord's messenger. The Quran says: «*The Apostle believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord*». (3) It was the duty of his close Companions to believe in it also. Similarly, it is the duty of later generations to

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(1) Surat Al-Ma'idah : 3.
(2) Surat Al-Nur : 55 (The Light).
(3) Surat Al-Baqarah : 285.

continue believing in the Revelation which had guided Muhammad. The life of Muhammad can never be interpreted except in the light of this Revelation and of the gnosis of the unseen.

Quraish's Interpretations of Revelation:

Whenever the Revelation came, Muhammad would tremble and become over-strained, with sweat exuded from his forehead. (1) As the phenomenon was so material and sensuous so as to be easily seen by everyone who was in contact with Muhammad, the Quraish tribe had interpreted it as a fit of madness and insanity. In this connection the Quran says: «*They say: 'O thou to whom the Message is being revealed! Truly thou art mad'*». (2) But soon, events had proved the falsehood of such allegation, because Muhammad did not change and continued to behave and conduct his own affairs with wisdom and steadiness. Moreover, the words which he used to tell were so eloquent, expressive, concise, soft and influential that they had completely won the Arabs admiration. The result was that they abandoned the idea of madness and admitted that such words could never be uttered by a mad or insane.

Failing in this, they came with another allegation. They said that Muhammad had become a possessed poet

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(1) Te two Imams (Al-Bukhari and Moslem) quote 'Aisha as saying: «I have seen him (Muhammad) receiving the Revelation in very cold days. When he left him, the Prophet's forehead would sweat immensely.» Al-Tirmidhi quotes 'Abadah Ibn Al-Samit as saying that whenever the Revelation came to the Prophet, he would suffer distress and his face change colour.

(2) Surat Al-Hijr : 6 (The Rocky Tract).

and that the devil of poetry had dwelt in his soul exactly as it had done before with great poets. It was this devil that taught him everything and made him utter these nice and eloquent words. But the arrangement and style of the Quranic verses had shown that they were completely different from poetry. When the Quraish tribe noticed that many people had fallen under the influence of the Quran, and that the new adherents had retracted from their old customs, traditions and sacred rites, paying no attention whatsoever to their families' requests, it considered this as a form of wickedness and branded Muhammad as a magician and soothsayer. The Quran states: «*And the unbelievers say, 'This is a sorcerer telling lies'*» (1) and «*For by the grace of thy Lord, thou art no (vulgar) soothsayer, nor art thou one possessed*». (2)

According to the Quran, «*But when the Truth came to them, they said: 'This is sorcery, and we do reject it!'*» (3)

Soon, they realised that Muhammad was far from being a soothsayer or a juggler. He did not practise any rite in the dark; he used to mix up with everyone and his movements were watched by all the people. He had never gone into retirement where he would practise magic and soothsaying which required hymns, charms, incense and certain instruments to perform the rite. The matter, then, should have been contrary to that. Muhammad was not an inspired magician, but spellbound. Explaining this, the Quran says. «*Behold, the*

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(1) Surat Sad: 4
(2) Surat Al-Tur: 29 (The Mount)
(3) Surat Al-Zukhruf: 30 (Gold Adornment)

wicked say, 'Ye follow none other than a man bewitched'». (1) They opined that whether Muhammad Ibn Abdullah had been mad or associated with the devil of poetry or had practised soothsaying and magic, his claim that he had received Revelation from God was a lie and an unaccepted assertion which should be met with opposition, repugnance and indignation. According to the Quran, «*And they say, 'This is only a falsehood invented*» (2) and «*But the misbelievers say: 'Naught is this but a lie which he has forged. and others have helped him at it.' In truth it is they who have put forward an inquiry and a falsehood*». (3) As regards the stories he had told them about the people who preceded them and the important religions and their teachings which they had never known, these were mere trifles, fancies and legends. Had there been in some of these new ideas a trace of righteousness, this should have been conveyed to him by certain other people. Referring to this, the Quran says: «*And they say: 'Tales of the ancients, which he has caused to be written: and they are dictated before him morning and evening'*» (4) and «*We know indeed that they say, 'It is a man that teaches him.' The tongue of him they wickedly point to is notably foreign*». (5)

Thus, the opponents of Muhammad did not leave even one stone unturned. They produced many suppositions and interpretations all of which had vilified the Muhammadan Revelation and the Quran delivered by

(1) Surat Al-Isra' : 47 (The Ascension).
(2) Surat Saba' : 43 (The City of Saba').
(3) Surat Al-Furqan : 4 (The Criterion).
(4) Ibid : 5.
(5) Surat Al-Nahl : 103 (The Bee).

him. In this, they had reached a point where no one, even of the present critics who exaggerate in supporting materialism and denial of facts hope to reach.

Muhammad Between Promises and Threats :

However, the Quraish tribe tried at that time to handle the crisis which was created by Muhammad with all means. From the outset, they resorted to rough methods, but when they failed, they tried temptation. They offered to bring the cleverest of doctors and soothsayers to cure him from his illness. If he wanted to exploit his Call in collecting money or attaining a position of authority, they were ready to give him that.

But all these offers failed to tempt Muhammad. On the contrary, they produced adverse results. He became more firm and persistent on his Call and determined to go with it till the end, either to triumph or to die. He doubled his efforts and expanded his struggle. He began with stultifying his people's thoughts, expressing his hatred and animosity for their idols, degrading and depreciating them. As a counter-attack, the Quraish tribe decided to continue fighting the Prophet relentlessly. They ridiculed and flouted him. They instigated the servants and the slaves to harm Muhammad and his followers as much as they could. Later, they held meetings to discuss the possibility of getting rid of Muhammad and his followers altogether. As a consequence, the first Muslims were now obliged to immigrate and seek refuge in Abyssinia. But still the Quraish tribe could not realise its objectives, because Muhammad continued to preach his Call with an enchanting eloquence, the Quran, reassuring that it was really revealed to him by

the Lord of the Universe. They noticed that the Quran had invaded and penetrated the hearts of the people and that it was recited secretly in their houses. They also noticed that their wives had converted to the new religion and that the slaves embraced Islam and rebelled against the masters. They observed that the marvellous Quran had influenced the nobility and that they used to go stealthily in the darkness to any place where they could listen to a recitation from the Holy Book by some of Muhammad's followers who committed it to memory.

'Umar Embraces Islam:

Then, a great event had taken place. The Quran, in a minute, had transformed the arch-enemy of Muhammad to a great believer in the Prophet. It was this same man, more than anyone else, who persecuted and tortured Muhammad's followers. Before embracing Islam, 'Umar used to torture his maid-servant for her faith in Muhammad's message and beat her until he himself felt tired and feared collapse. It was he who hit and wounded his sister when he saw her reciting the Quran with her husband. But now, 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab had become a staunch supporter of the new religion.

In this way, the Quran had invaded the hearts of the opponents of Muhammad, most of them becoming excessive in zeal and support to the Muhammadan Revelation.

And Khalid Too:

Another example is Khalid Ibn Al-Walid who was supposed to be the last Arab to believe in Muhammad.

Khalid Ibn Al-Walid was foremost among the Arabs who tried to defeat Muhammad in the battle of Uhud. In this battle, Muhammad was about to be killed and, in fact, his death was announced. Such an announcement would have been disastrous to Islam and a cause for the downfall of the Prophet of the Muslims at the hands of Khalid Ibn Al-Walid. It was then natural that the victorious commander, who had defeated Muhammad and his army, would disbelieve him and forget about his message and Revelation. But the fact, to the amazement of everybody, was contrary to that. This clever and unparalleled commander slipped away from among the Quraishis and joined Muhammad in Medina, putting himself at his disposal. He became one of God's swords with which Muhammad had overcome the disbelievers and resisted their stratagem. Soon, Khalid Ibn Al-Walid was given the commandement of an army which was sent to invade Mecca. With great enthusiasm he went on fighting, wounding and killing his own countrymen as well as the members of his own tribe and his kith and kin. He wanted to continue doing this had it not been for Prophet Muhammad who asked him to stop because the the city had already surrendered.

This is how the Quran had invaded the hearts of the people who in the beginning were the most scared of it. In the end, the whole of Arabia had surrendered to the Muhammadan Revelation and declared its conviction and acceptance of the Quran and of Muhammad's message.

After twenty years of continuous struggle during which time all lawful and unlawful means were utilised to defeat Muhammad and suppress his Call, the whole

peninsula declared its acceptance of the new Call. No one in any age could have accused Muhammad of having won his battles by deceipt or delusion or by exploiting the ignorance and simplicity of his countrymen.

Even the harsh critics of the present time cannot claim that Muhammad had not passed through hard trials or that his Call had not been scrutinised by his contemporaries. It is sufficient for anyone to read the Holy Quran, which recorded all the events of these days, (1) to see what strong criticism had been levelled, not only against Muhammad's teachings and preachings as regards monotheism, resurrection and belief in Revelation, but against the Prophet in person, his manners and conduct. In history there is a true testimony that had not Muhammad been so truthful and honest, he would not have been able to achieve such a success. A liar could not have been able to stand all these tribulations and a pretender could not have been able to achieve gradual success or invade people's hearts one after another. Such a man would not also been able to subjugate all parts of Arabia, spiritually and physically, nor would his prestige increase generation after generation.

Success of the Miraculous Muhammadan Call After His Death:

Nothing is more surprising than the great success which had been achieved after the death of Muhammad

(1) World historians and orientalists in particular, rather than the Muslims and the true believers, are agreed that the Quran is the most correct portray of the life of the Arabs. It gives a true survey of their disputes and discussions with the Prophet.

Ibn Abdullah. No sooner had Muhammad passed away than his followers and disciples been more convinced of his greatness and the truthfulness of his message. They went east, west and south to propagate the religion of Muhammad. Thence, the great victories and conquests which had no parallel as regards the speed by which they had been made and the vast territories which came under the Muslim rule. It is surprising to note that spiritual conquest had gone side by side with military invasion. Who could tell by which power the Persian people had embraced the new religion which was preached by an illiterate Arab who had passed away like any other creature? The Persians converted to Islam at a time when they were enjoying a flourishing civilisation and culture. They had looked at the Arabs with disdain. It was natural then that after being defeated by the Arabs under certain circumstances, the Persians would justifiably harbour hatred and rancour against them. Had the Persians wanted to embrace Islam, they should have been the last to do so. But history says that what had happened was completely contrary to that. The Persians had embraced Islam en masse, exactly as had been done before by the Arabs. No sooner had the second century started than the Persians had become the pillars of Islamic civilisation.

In Egypt:

Another example is Egypt. Its history shows that during four thousand years it had never embraced any religion its conquerors brought in. On the contrary, it had succeeded in convincing them to embrace its own faith, to follow its own traditions and to use its own

language. But when Islam knocked at their door, the Egyptians for the first time in their history infringed their custom and embraced this new religion en masse. They had in fact exceeded what had previously been done by the Persians. They adopted the language of Islam and the Quran, leaving aside their national language. They replaced the traditional letters of their language with the Arabic letters. Egypt is the home and banner-bearer of Arabism and Islam. Some one may allege that what had happened there was something usual since the defeated peoples had to imitate always the conquerors and adopt their religion. And because the Arabs were the victorious, the subjugated peoples had, according to this theory, to follow them. But this allegation is completely baseless, because the power of Islam and the greatness of Muhammad did not increase unless after the Arabs had lost every power and authority and become subdued.

The Role of the Turks in Spreading Islam:

The Turks, who were arch-enemies of the Arabs, had converted to Islam. It was they, and not the Arabs, who protected and defended Islam over many centuries. The Tatars, too, who eradicated Islamic supremacy from over the East, had embraced Islam afterwards, and their capital, Samarkand, had been one of the greatest centres which provided the region with fervour and life.

By which magic and personal character had Muhammad influenced peoples even after his death and after the downfall of the Muslims? How would such a thing happen while the influence of the greatest figures of history, like Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon and others,

had withered immediately after their death, leaving behind them only little effect similar to that of any other historical event ?

With which power had this illiterate Arab, who led a normal life for over forty years, been able to do all these deeds and achieve all these victories and successes ? There is no doubt that this was the force of the Revelation which though we do not know its substance, yet we can see and feel its impression.

Denial of Revelation Leads to Deification of Muhammad:

It is a fact that if the Revelation is denied, peoples will find themselves in a critical situation in which they will consider Muhammad a god. Such a thing had happened before when the Christians had considered Jesus the creative lord and the Buddhists Buddha as a personification of god. Even the humanity at large does the same when it makes of the great heroes creative and dominating deities.

If we study all the sides of Muhammad's personality we find that he was so firm and commanding that he could not be matched by any other person in the whole history of mankind.

If we take Muhammad as a legislator, he should certainly be the greatest legislator ever known by humanity. The Quran had covered all the basic laws and principles required for regulating appropriately the life of man and of the community, whether in peace or in war. Today, it is noticed that humanity is doing its best to adopt the laws and rulings decreed by the Quran. Freedom, fraternity, equality, democracy, socialism and

universal cooperation were mentioned and called for by the Quran more than one thousand and three hundred years ago. If Muhammad Ibn Abdullah was the author of the Quran, he, undoubtedly, must have been the greatest of all legislators the humanity had ever known. This fact is upheld by many great European scholars. (1)

If we consider Muhammad one of the savants or philosophers, he must have been the greatest of all of them, because over all these long centuries, he made all

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(1) Gibbon, the greatest historian of modern times, says that Islam is general in its laws. These laws apply to the kings down to paupers. They had been formulated in exactness with no parallel in the world.

According to Leo Dorsh, Islam is a natural, humane, economic and moral religion. No enacted law escapes its jurisprudence. In Islam, the solution of the two problems preoccupying the whole world is found. The first is embodied in God's saying, «The believers are brethren», which constitutes the noblest of all socialist principles. As regards the second, it is (Zakat) — the poor-rate — which every wealthy person must pay, and the right of the needy to exact it even by force in case the wealthy refuse to pay it voluntarily. This is the effective remedy of anarchism.

Professor Massignon is of the opinion that Islam is distinguished with providing a genuine idea of equality which is represented in the contribution of each one of the people by one tenth of his own income to the general treasury. Islam is against interest (Riba), government loans and indirect taxes imposed on the necessities of life. On the other hand, it safeguards and defends the rights of the husband, of the son, of ownership and of trade capitals. In this, Islam stands in the middle between capitalist bourgeoisie and communism and Bolshvism. Islam's past sets a good example of people's cooperation and mutual understanding. No community other than that of the Muslims could have succeeded in uniting many different peoples on a basis of equality in duties and responsibilities. The great Islamic communities in Africa and East-India, and the Muslim minorities of China and Japan also, had given the proof that it is easy for Islam to bring all conflicting factions of peoples into harmony. (Islamic Civilisation, by Kurd Ali).

nations and peoples reckon on his wisdom, on his philosophy in life, and on his ideas about metaphysics.

Again, if we consider him a founder of a state and a builder of a civilisation, he should have been the greatest of all those statesmen who established kingdoms, states and cultures. There is no reference in the archives of history to any nation other than the Arabs who were the only people who came up so from the depth of degradation to the hieght of civilisation and power.

Thus, we have all reasons to place Muhammad Ibn Abdullah at the top of legislators, sages, philosophers, reformers, conquerors and prophets. But why should not we allege that God had been impersonified in Muhammad as it had been alleged by the Christians and the Buddhists while referring to their deities ? In fact, such an idea cannot be entertained because we have complete trust in the sincerity, truthfulness and honesty of Muhammad in delivering his Lord's message. Muhammad was one of God's servants, like any other servant, and an ordinary man, like any other ordinary man. The Quran ordered him : «*Say : 'I am but a man like yourselves*». (1) Like any other human being, Muhammad, personally, was powerless. He had never laid claim for himself as a man knowing the secrets of the future or owning the treasures of the earth rather than those of the Heavens. The Quran says : «*Say : 'I have no power over any good or harm to myself except as God willeth. If I had knowledge of the unseen, I should have multiplied all good, and no evil should have touched me : I am but a warner, and a bringer of glad tid-*

(1) Surat Al-Kahf: 110 (The Cave)

ings to those who have faith'». (1) It also says: «*Say: 'I tell you not that with me are the treasures of God, nor do I know what is hidden, nor do I tell you, I am an angel. I but follow what is revealed to me'*». (2) «*Glory to (God) Who did take His servant for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque*» (3) and «*Blessed is He Who sent down the Criterion to His servant, that it may be an admonition to all creatures*». (4)

But how could Muhammad who had declared that he was a mortal, that he did not know the secrets of the unseen more than anyone else, and that he was powerless, allure all peoples and bring them within the folds of his spiritual power? As a matter of fact, the mind can never find a convincing and reassuring explanation for this phenomenon except in complete believing in the Muhammadan Revelation and in its representation, the Holy Quran.

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(1) Surat Al-'Araf : 188 (The Heights).
(2) Surat Al-An'Am : 50 Cattle).
(3) Surat Al-Isra' : 1 Ascension).
(4) Surat Al-Furqan : 1 (The Criterion).

CHAPTER 6

THE QURAN AND THE REVELATION

Arabs' Inability to Imitate the Quran — Dissuation — Preservation of the Quran and Protection of its Texts Against Misconstruction — Collection of the Quran — Copies of the Quran — Differences in Gospels' Texts — Unchangeability of Meanings and Objectives of the Quran — The Quran and the Sciences — The Quranic Style — Quranic Verses as Explained by Modern Sciences — Quran's Prophecies of the Future — Confirmation of Muhammadan Revelation — Truth About Revelation — Revelation is Zenith of Inspiration — Confirmation of Muhammad's Prophethood is Confirmation of All Other Prophethoods — Science of Comparative Studies of Religions and its Indispensability.

Now, we have to study the Holy Quran which is unanimously agreed to be a correct and comprehensive record of the Revelation which came to Muhammad Ibn Abdullah. In so doing, we will see how its characteristics and texts had made of it a unique book and how it could not have been written by an ordinary person.

Arabs' Inability to Imitate the Quran:

The first subject of our study of the Quran and its history is its challenge to the Arabs to produce some-

thing like it. It says: «*Say: 'If the whole of mankind and jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support'*». (1) Though the Arabs had been keen to contradict and stultify Muhammad and try to prove the hollowness of his Call, alleging that it was nothing but mere soothsaying and jugglery, yet they, before such a challenge, had shown complete inability to produce an imitation of the Quran. Though they had resorted to all lawful or unlawful means to hurt and humiliate Muhammad, yet the Quran's challenge to the Arabs remained unanswered, and though they had been known for their contradiction of anything they heard, either verse or prose, yet they could not dispute the Quran. It was the custom that whenever a poet would deliver a poem, another poet would contradict him with another piece of poetry. Any speaker was to be followed by another with more eloquence and strong argumentation, who would gainsay what the former had already said. But when the Quran made the challenge, they kept silent and became dumbfounded. Here, the Quran made another challenge, trying to prove again their complete inability. It demanded of them to produce only some chapters similar to those of the Quran, and not all. The Quran says: «*Or they may say, 'He forged it'. Say, 'Bring ye then ten Suras forged, like unto it, and call (to your aid) whomsoever ye can, other than God, if ye speak the truth'.*» (2)

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(1) Surat Al-Isra': 88 (The Ascension).
(2) Surat Hud : 13.

The more the challenges were made by the Quran, the more incapacity was shown by the Arabs. Lastly, they were challenged to produce only one chapter, whatever small it might be, like those contained in the Quran each of them composed of no more than three verses. (1) The Quran states: «*And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Sura like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides God, if your (doubts) are true. But if ye cannot — And of a surety ye cannot — then fear the Fire whose fuel is men and stones, which is prepared for those who reject Faith*». (2) And still the Arabs, opposing the Prophet, could not answer even this small challenge. They, of course, were unable to produce anything like the Quran.

Dissuation:

There is nothing more surprising for any researcher in the history of the Quran than this unusual question. Some people had interpreted the inability of the contemporaries of the Quran to produce a similar book as not resulting from incapacity and incompetence, but from an unseen power which dissuaded them not to do so though they were able to do it. However, they alleged that the miraculous nature of the Quran had been inherent in that hidden power. But whether this inability was due to incapacity or to dissuation, the fact remains that the Quran is never to be equalled to any

(1) An example is Surat Al-Kauther (Abundance); it is compsed of three verses only.

(2) Surat Al-Baqarah : 23-24.

other Scripture and that it was something extraordinary : «*Surely we have heard a wonderful Quran*». (1)

Preservation of the Quran and Protection of its Texts Against Misconstruction :

Among all the religious books of the world the Holy Quran is the only Book which had been preserved intact as it was revealed to Muhammad and dictated to his Companions. It had been transmitted to the following generations without any misconstruction, ommission or addition. Every word and every letter of the Holy Book are recorded as they had left the lips of the Prophet. No doubt can be cast on this Book as it was the case with any other Scripture or scientific book.

It is an established fact that unlike any saying of the Prophet, the Quran was to be written with great caution on tablets of white stone and palm-stems. Meantime, the majortiy of Muslims used to take the verses direct from the lips of the Prophet and commit them to memory through recitation.

The Arabs' tenacity of memory was remarkable and no doubt could be cast on it. In order to keep their own way of social life and preserve their rights, their genealogical trees, traditions and laws, the majority of the Arabs, the illiterate, had to commit everything to their memory, which was very sensitive and intelligent. For about more than twenty years, the Prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, was to teach the Quran, to ask the people to adhere to it, and to say their

(1) Surat Al-Jinn : 1.

daily five prayers with it. Thus, a good opportunity was afforded to all the Muslims to hear and learn what they had not yet heard and learned of the Quran. They also had to learn the whole of it by heart and intonate it.

When Muhammad died, he left behind him a big number of people who learned the whole of the Quran by heart and a similar number of other people who learned most of it, but still were apprised of the rest. In addition to this, there was another class of people who knew writing and kept under their custody some different chapters and verses of the Quran.

Soon after the death of the Prophet, Abou Bakr, his successor and close friend, issued out of his zeal to preserve the Holy Quran orders that it should be collected and written in a single volume. According to the annals of history, Abou Bakr took the decision at the instance of 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, (1) one of the two

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(1) Al-Bukhari quotes Zaid Ibn Thabit as narrating the following story :

After the battle of Al-Yamamah, Abou Bakr sent for me. When I went to see him, I found there 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab. Abou Bakr, may God be pleased with him, said : "'Umar has come to tell me that in this battle great carnage had occurred among the Muslims, and that many of the reciters of the Holy Quran lost their lives. 'Umar apprehended great danger if more reciters fell in some other battles. In my opinion, it is absolutely necessary that you give immediate orders for the collection of the Quran». «How can I do a thing which the Holy Prophet has not done?», replied Abou Bakr. 'Umar said : «But that is the best course under the circumstances». After some discussion, Abou Bakr was convinced and his breast was expanded by God and agreed to 'Umar's idea.

Zaid Continues : Abou Bakr said to me : «You are a wise man and we have nothing against you. You were to write the Revelations of the Prophet, may God's peace and bless-

who laid the foundation of Islam firmly after the death of Muhammad.

Zaid Ibn Thabit, the amanuensis of the Prophet's Revelation, was entrusted with the task, and he had done it very accurately, according to a precise plan. In the performance of the task, Zaid did not depend on the memory of the Arabs, but searched for the verses which were written in the presence of the Prophet. Not only that ; he also made it a condition that no written verse of the Quran would be accepted until two witnesses bore testimony that it had been written in the presence of Muhammad. This had been done despite the fact that Zaid himself had learned the whole of the

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ings be upon him. Search, therefore, for (the written portions of) the Quran and collect it (into one volume)». And so heavy did the task appear to me that it would not have been more difficult for me if I had been asked to remove a mountain. I said : How can you do a thing which the Holy Prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, has not done? Abou Bakr said : But this is the best course under the circumstances. At last, God has expanded my breast as He has done with Abou Bakr and 'Umar, may God be pleased with them. Then I began to search for the Quran and to collect it from palm-stems and tablets of white stone and the breasts of men until I found the concluding verses of the Chapter entitled (Al-Taubah) — Repentance — in the possession of Abou Khuzaymah Al-Ansari, and I did not find them in the possession of anyone else. The last two verses were : «How hath come unto you an Apostle from amongst yourselves : it grieves him that ye should perish : Ardently anxious is he over you : to the believers is he most kind and merciful. But if they turn away, say, 'God sufficeth me : There is no god but He, on Him is my trust, He the Lord of the Throne (of glory) Supreme.'»

Zaid concludes : The collection remained in the possession of Abou Bakr and after his death in that of 'Umar. After 'Umar's death, the copy was transferred to the custody of Hafsah, daughter of 'Umar, may God be pleased with all of them.

Quran by heart. But he wanted all precaution to be taken in this regard. (1)

Further Copies of the Quran :

It is needless to say that the performance of this task was completed under the supervision of Abou Bakr, 'Umar and other Companions of the Prophet. All of them wanted to protect the Quran and keep it immune against any misconstruction ; and all of them, too, had held its verses in high sanctity. Therefore, it is evident that collection of the Quran had been done in a sound and unblemished way. But despite this, the work had not stopped at this point. After a short time, during the reign of the third Caliph, 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan, the collection of the Quran was scrutinised again, and 'Uthman deemed it necessary to circulate official copies to various countries. Then, Zaid, with a syndicate of Quraishi scribes, were called to write a number of copies of the Quran. Great precaution was again taken similar to that taken when the Book was first collected. Five copies

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(1) In (Al-Itqan fi Ulumul Quran), by Al-Siyuti, the following story appears in the chapter dealing with the collection and arrangement of the Quran : «A report made by Ibn Dawoud, quoting Yahya Ibn Abdul Rahman Ibn Hatib, says : ' 'Umar rose and declared that whoever had received anything directly from the Holy Prophet should bring it (to Zaid).' They (the Companions) used to write it on tablets and palm-stems in the life-time of the Holy Prophet, and nothing was accepted from anyone until two witnesses bore testimony to the authenticity of the verse. This denotes that Zaid did not confine his search to that which had been written, but wanted two witnesses to bear testimony that they had really heard the verses direct from the Prophet. This has been done despite the fact that Zaid himself had learned the whole of the Quran by heart. It was a question of great precaution.

were written, one of them was kept in Medina, and the remaining four were sent to Basrah, Kufah, Mecca and Syria. It was said that the copies were seven, and not five, and that all of them had been sent to the above-mentioned places plus Egypt and the Yemen. The Muslims all over the world were asked not to recognise any Quranic verses except those contained in the official copies and to burn all other copies said to be the Quran.

Though thousands of Muhammad's Companions who learned most of the Quran by heart, but knowing all of it, were still living, and though 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan had been severely attacked, even abused, and was accused of being apostate and deviated from the proper path, yet no one had charged him with being tampering with the Quran. Not a single voice from any part of the enraged state had raised objection to any text alleging that it was not Quranic, or did not convey the correct meaning. Even after the civil strife in which 'Uthman was assassinated had swept over and the Muslim world was divided into two camps, one fully supporting 'Ali and vilifying 'Uthman and his family, and the other vilifying 'Ali and defending the persecuted Caliph, the text of the Quran remained safe and unaffected by these differences. The Muslims of all times and climes had no text of the Quran other than that which had been previously collected and arranged. This text is the same which is used by today's Muslims. Whenever one goes in the Muslim world, from East-India Islands in the Indian Ocean to Albania or to Europe, from China in the East to Morocco, he will not find except one text of the Quran. Even if one studies any old copy of the Quran which was used by the

Muslims in days of yore, he will not find in it any change, but the same words and the same verses.

Differences in Gospels' Texts:

One cannot realise the significance of this fact and the uniqueness of the Quran unless he studies the text of the Gospel in circulation now and sees to which extent it could be attributed to Jesus Christ, may peace be upon him. From such a study, we find that there are four different texts, each one is considered the sacred Gospel. These Gospels differ in most of the details, and sometimes on very important issues. Even these four different texts were selected from among hundreds of texts all of them were the official text of the Gospel. Though the Church had tried its best to suppress the other texts, yet new texts of the Gospel had been produced in modern times among which was the Gospel of Birnabas which is outlawed by the Church and considered to have been forged in later years.

The four texts officially sanctioned by the Church are said to have been written in 41 A.D. in a language different from the present one. The consensus of opinion is that they had been written in the outset in Hebrew and in another language derived from the Caledonian and Assyrian languages. But the present world had received these Gospels written in Greek. A number of modern European scholars are in doubt as regards the authenticity of these Gospels and their assignment to Jesus Christ. However, all these questions are enveloped with doubt, having not a single fact which could be endorsed by history.

If this is the case with the Gospel, what would be the case with the other Scriptures which are not kept so safe like the Gospel ?

In this regard, it is quite enough to refer to a statement made by one of the greatest European orientalists, Sir William Muir, who studied the Quran scrupulously. He has categorically affirmed that among all Scriptures the Quran was the sacred book which was true in being attributed to its author and remained all the time safe and free from any forgery, misconstruction or change.

Sir Muir says : «There is probably in the world no other book which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text. The various readings are wonderfully few in number, chiefly confined to differences in the vowel points and diacritical signs. But these, invented at a later date, can hardly be said to affect the text of 'Uthman». (Life of Mohammad, Chapter I, page 23).

Sir Muir continues : «The conclusion, which we may now with confidence draw, is that the editions of Zaid and 'Uthman were not only faithful, but both of them, so far as the materials went, complete. Its collectors did not intend to omit anything about the Revelation. We may upon the strongest presumption affirm that every verse in the Quran is the genuine and unaltered composition of Muhammad himself». (Ch. I, p. XXVIII).

From this, and from the testimony of non-Muslim scholars, it appears that the Quran was an exception among other Scriptures in being kept intact despite the passage of time and the remoteness and separation of human communities from each other and the variation

of circumstances, sects, nationalities and races which believe in the Quran.

Unchangeability of Meanings and Objectives of the Quran:

As the written texts of the Quran had survived the ages without being misconstrued, mispronounced or changed, so were its meanings, objectives and principles. This is another characteristic and a miracle which no sacred book other than the Quran can claim. Any book on any subject will go in oblivion or lose its prestige by the passage of time. Human knowledges are in continuous evolution and every stage of man's development undergoes many changes, revolutions and amendments in human knowledge. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the world had witnessed one of the greatest revolutions of mankind. The result was that all the books which outlived the long ages, for being the product of human learning and knowledge, could not in the light of the new sciences survive even for one day more. The scientific works of Aristotle, for instance, which remained the basis of human learning for about two thousand years, lost most of their value. The nineteenth century, with its discoveries and sciences, had done away with the old books' theories of physics, astrology and geography, all of them being considered something of the past. Very often, the man of present times will be bored and even renounce reading of any scientific book which was published before the first world war. This is because the war had immensely changed the human ideas, systems and knowledge as well as the scientific facts.

After the second world war, it has been said that any scientific or technical book written before the war would not remain in use for long, because the world is about to witness a great revolution in its conditions and science which will dwarf those of the nineteenth century. So, it is surprising to note that though many centuries had elapsed and many changes and developments taken place, the Quran and its meanings remained intact.

The Quran and the Sciences:

The advanced sciences cannot disown the verses of the Quran nor could they cast any doubt on their meanings. On the contrary, the more the sciences are introduced and discoveries made, the more the Quranic verses become clear and confirmed and its secrets and mysteries revealed. It is true that the Quran is not technically a scientific book. It does not deal with any specific scientific subject or any scientific problem or theory. But despite that, it refers, in a general way, to all the natural and social phenomena, patterns and laws of the Universe. The Quran deals with life, death, the planets, and plantation. It urges man to explore the secrets of nature, to search for the truth, and to think deeply in all matters. Not a single human subject had been excluded from the Quran. All matters were dealt with by the Quran, either directly or indirectly. It is to be noticed that all the ancient Islamic works written in Arabic on various scientific subjects, such as medicine, engineering, agriculture or chemistry, etc., had begun with a Quranic verse, using it as a title and indication to the study. It was probable that contradic-

tion might have existed between the Quranic verses which were written thirteen centuries ago and the new sciences, but this did not occur at all. On the contrary, a number of scientists had interpreted the Quranic verses in the light of the latest of scientific discoveries. These scholars were not only theologians, but also scientists. One of them was the late Abdel Aziz Ismail Pasha, doyen of Egypt's physicians, who showed the strange conformity between the Quranic verses and the latest findings of modern sciences.

The Quranic Style:

The Holy Quran can always be interpreted in the light of modern sciences whatever developments these would undergo. This is due to the fact that the Quranic verses, style and meanings are so flexible that they can reconcile themselves with the various explanations of all times and climes. In this Quranic verse, for instance, «*And (He has created) horses, mules, and donkeys, for you to ride and use for show; and He has created (other) things of which ye have no knowledge*» (1), the Quran enumerates all means of communication which were known to man for thousands of years. The horse, the mule and the donkey were the only means of communication which were utilised and domisticated by Adam's offspring. It was only these animals which were used by Napoleon early in the nineteenth century after Christ. Had this Quranic verse ended with mentioning only the horse, the mule and the donkey as means of communication, it would have certainly contradicted the

(1) Surat Al-Nahl: 8 (The Bee).

latest developments when these animals are about to completely disappear in the advanced societies. But the last portion of the verse, «*and He has created (other) things of which ye have no knowledge*» makes it possible to include all other means of communication we already know, such as the plane, the car and the bicycle, and even everything of the sort which might be invented by man in future, in the *(other things of which ye have no knowledge)*. In another verse the Quran says: «*So I do call to witness what ye see and what ye see not*». (1) To the ancient interpreters of the Quran, the phrase «*and what ye see not*» had referred to the jinn, the ghosts and the spirits. But it can also refer at the same time to the huge world which has been discovered by man in recent years. This world is that of the microbes and germs, the microscopic organisms which fill the air and the water, damaging our lives, killing our bodies and spoiling our food. Though these microbes are unseen or untouched by us, yet they can do us either good or harm. It is then right to say that the phrase «*and what ye see not*» refers to this living organisms. If spiritualism becomes tomorrow an established fact, the verse will certainly be interpreted as also referring to the spiritual world. Thus, a short verse from the Quran encompasses all the scientific developments and all man's beliefs of all ages.

Quranic Verses as Explained by Modern Sciences:

Any resarcher of the Quran can go even beyond this limit. He can safely state that it contains many passages

(1) Surat Al-Haqqa: 38 (The Sure Reality)

which remained unexplained and vague in olden times, but had been elucidated in the light of modern sciences. This proves that not only would the meanings of the Quran adapt themselves to the changing times and to the sciences, but will remain treasures concealed and unexploited until such time when they are discovered and then utilised by the efficient people who can do that. An example of this is this verse which deals with the origin of man, mentioning that he had been created from a sperm. It says: «*....thy Lord Who creates — creates man from a sperm*». (1)

The ancient Muslim scholar had interpreted this Quranic verse according to its literal meaning. He knew nothing much about the sperm or the clot of congealed blood. But when the microscope was invented in our present times, we discovered that the fluid which goes from the male into the female, which is the origin of human life, is formed of millions of millions of tiny seminal cells which resemble a clot of congealed blood in shape. Only after the discoveries made by the modern sciences had the secret contained in this Quranic verse been revealed.

In the Quran there is another verse which deals with the subject of life which the ancient scholars failed in explaining. It was interpreted according to their thinking, but when the modern sciences were introduced the correct explanation was produced. The Quran states: «*And We send the fecundating winds*». (2) Not before long did people know that the plants are living organ-

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(1) Surat Al-'Alaq : 2 (The Sperm).
(2) Surat Al-Hijr : 22 (The Rockey Tract).

isms similar to man and animal, that they originate from a male and a female, that the females are fertilised exactly as any other living female is fertilised, and that in most of the cases such fertilisation takes place through the movement of the wind.

This is another example of how the Quranic verses were in conformity with the findings of modern sciences.

Quran's Prophecies of the Future:

Another characteristic and uniqueness of the Quran is its prophecy of many unseen events, all of them came true in later times. Writers, while dealing with this subject, had referred to the Quran's prediction of the Romans' victory after their defeat. They set this as an example of such prediction. As a matter of fact, the verses of the Quran speak profusely about various events which in later times came true. An example is the verses of Surat Al-Lahab (The Flame) which state: «*Perish the hands of Abou Lahab; Perish he. No profit to him from all his wealth, and all his gains. Burnt soon will he be in a fire of blazing flame. His wife shall carry the (crackling) wood as fuel. A twisted rope of palm-leaf fibre round her (own) neck*». These verses were among the first verses of the Quran recitd by Muhammad, may God's peace and blessings be upon him. He recited them in the early days of his Call. They referred to an eternal curse which had fallen on a member of the Quraish tribe. From the history of the Muhammadan Call we see that many intransigent and arch-opponents had changed into staunch supporters of the Call, thus, deserving to be forgiven and absolved of their sins, and

then rewarded. What would have happened if Abou Lahab had been treated on the same footing like those who believed in Muhammad and supported Islam after they had been its enemies? But the Quran had passed its judgement on Abou Lahab and singled him out from among other Quraishis, invoking evil upon him. And thus, Abou Lahab died accursed, despised and driven away.

As promised by the Quran, «*And God will defend thee from men (who mean mischief)*», (1) the Prophet remained under Divine protection against the innumerable dangers that threatened him from all quarters. By this verse, Muhammad had been protected against assassination. The promise was fulfilled, for Muhammad had died in his bed, at the age of 63, among his family, despite the numerous plots against his life and the twenty three years he spent in continuous armed conflict.

Other Quranic verses had promised the protection of the Quran itself against loss and dispersion; and the promise was fulfilled. The Quran said: «*Move not thy tongue concerning the (Quran) to make haste therewith. It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it*». (2) It also reassures: «*We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)*». (3).

The Quran had promised the early strugglers of entering Mecca, which opposed and fought and determined to eradicate them and clear the land of their faith, safe

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(1) Surat Al-Ma'idah : 67 (The Table Spread)
(2) Surat Al-Qiyamah : 16-17 (The Resurrection)
(3) Surat Al-Hijr : 9 (The Rocky Tract)

and victorious. The Quran says: «*Ye shall enter the Sacred Mosque, if God wills, with minds secure, heads shaved, hair cut short, and without fear*». (1)

Again, this prophecy came true and the Muslims set out for Mecca, with the objective of performing pilgrimage, without difficulty. Later, they entered it as conquerors and, thus, the word of God had been accomplished.

In the tenth year after the Hijrah (Emigration), at the farewell pilgrimage, the Prophet recited to the Muslims the last Quranic verses revealed to him : «*This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion*». (2) This verse had been, in fact, a prophecy of the end of Muhammad's message. A year after making this announcement, the Prophet left the worldly life, after discharging the Trust and delivering the Message.

The Quran had also promised the Muslims to make them in Muhammad's life-time and after his death rulers on the earth, leaders of mankind, and the heirs to a kingdom in another land. It said : «*God has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them : that He will establish in authority their religion — the one which He will change (their state), after the*

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(1) Surat Al-Fath : (The Victory).
(2) Surat Al-Ma'idah : 3.

fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace». (1)

And again the Quran's promise was fulfilled and the prophecy came true. The Arabs had really ruled over the world and a quite few of them had governed many peoples of that era.

Last and not the least, the Quran had fortold of the wonderful scientific development which abounds the humanity now and brings it nearer to the understanding of the secrets of existence and to the reality of creation and the Creator. God says: «*Soon will We show them Our signs in the (furthest) regions (of the earth), and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that thy Lord doth witness all things? Ah indeed; are they in doubt concerning the meeting with their Lord? Ah indeed! it is He that doth encompass all things*». (2)

These Quranic verses are sufficient to show how the Quran had made prophecies and how they had later come true.

Confirmation of Muhammadan Revelation:

Any study of any phase of the Muhammadan Revelation will certainly lead us to believe completely in it, whether this study is made on the personality of the Prophet, his life with its various stages and his commanding impression on peoples, or on the text of the Quran through the analysis of its words and characteristics.

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(1) Surat Al-Nur: 55 (The Light)
(2) Surat Fussilat: 53-54.

Muhammad was an Arab who knew no writing or reading. He had been brought up amidst an ignorant and illiterate people who had no culture, civilisation, sciences or even books. Therefore, it was obvious that Muhammad could not be able to write a book like the Quran while he knew nothing about writing or reading. In fact, no human being of any calibre of learning can write such a book. Moreover, it is impossible for any-one to write a book with all these characteristics and prophecies which had adapted themselves to all ages and challenged every scientific advancement. Had the Quran been written by Muhammad, and not revealed by God, it could not have received from all peoples sanctity and pre-eminence. (1)

Muhammad, the poor and orphan, could not have influenced the whole world through this remarkable Book had not his soul been lit by the Eternal Light which overwhelms the Universe with radiance and had created it by its sheer will.

There is no doubt that Muhammad was truthful and honest in describing himself as one who had not spoken out of desire, but through a Revelation which was sent to him by a Mighty Power.

Truth about Revelation:

It now remains to study the causes of the disbe-lievers' doubts as to the Revelation whose existence was proved materially.

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(1) Some people try to interpret the word (illiterate) in some other meaning. It has, in fact, only one meaning, and that is «the person who does not know reading and writing».

In my opinion, doubts on the truth of Revelation spring from the material picture some of the people try to produce. They portray it in the form of a particular body, with wings to fly with, feet and hoofs. It is obvious that such imagination is rejected by modern thinking. The human mind rejects any idea of God's incarnation and representation in any material form. I think there is no reason at all to insist on giving the Revelation such an alleged material picture because neither the Holy Quran nor the authenticated Prophetic sayings had portrayed it in any particular form. All that they had said about it was the confirmation of its existence, but without going into detail about its shape or nature.

It is an established fact that the Prophet had seen in the beginning of the Call a certain picture which he was sure it was the Lord's angel, though he did not reveal its nature. The Quran, however, had reaffirmed the Prophet's certainty, saying: «*And without doubt he saw him in the clear horizon*». (1) The Prophet had referred to this event in more than one saying and, therefore, it has to be taken for granted. Excepting this, the Quran and the Prophet's sayings did not refer to the Revelation except that it was a particular spiritual happening which occurred to the Prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, overflooding his heart with light and learning. Giving its true picture, the Quran says: «*Verily this is a Revelation from the Lord of the Universe; with it came down the Spirit of Faith and Truth to thy heart and mind, that thou mayest admonish*

(1) Surat Al-Takweir : 23 (The Folding Up).

in the perspicuous Arabic tongue». (1) The Quran, in more than one place, refers to the fact that it was the heart of the Prophet which was the receptacle of the Revelation.

There is another Quranic passage which gives in detail what has been given in other verses in brief. It is mentioned towards the end of Surat Al-Shura (The Counsel). It reads as follows: «*It is not fitting for a man that God should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a messenger to reveal, with God's permission, what God wills: for He is Most High, Most Wise. And thus have We, by Our command, sent inspiration to thee; thou knewest not (before) what was Revelation, and what was Faith; but We have made the (Quran) a Light, wherewith We guide such of Our servants as We will; and verily thou dost guide (men) to the straight way*».

This may be the more detailed reference made about the nature of the Revelation. It categorically states that the Revelation was a spirit sent by God's command, which had no shape, dimensions or weight. It was something unfathomable, like life and death. It was a spirit which man must believe in its existence because he feels its impression on his own self, as a human being, and on all the other living organisms which surround him, but without realising its substance.

Revelation is Zenith of Inspiration:

It is not difficult for man to imagine in the end that it was through revelation from an unseen divine

(1) Surat Al-Shu'ara': 193-195 (The Poets).

power, and not through rational education, that man had received learning and knowledge and known the facts and secrets of the Universe. The person who had received such revelation was sure that that power was the Creator's. It is a fact that all the sciences and knowledges had been first received by the mind through a power different from that of ordinary thinking which was controlled by certain rules and potentials. That was the power of inspiration. And through unseen inspiration, and not through the mind, man had undoubtedly started to use the languages, to sing songs, to compose poetry, to paint, and to construct buildings. A proof of that is the fact that the illiterate Arab had composed his poems before his mind knew that poetry had to be composed in special rhythms and metres. He had expressed himself in a classical Arabic language before his mind learned its grammar. Man had also constructed buildings and used stones in good order without any knowledge of engineering. He kindled fire, cultivated land and passed through all stages of civilisation before his mind knew on what basis such a civilisation had been set up. Man always had done the things before cognizance of their substance. There is no doubt that the first correct conception which came to man's mind had been projected on it by an outward power. This power the scholars call inspiration. Everyone has experienced inspiration. Anyone whose mind is pre-occupied by a problem, or busy in a piece of work or art, will certainly feel the impact of inspiration on his work, but in degrees, everyone according to his spiritual and psychological preparedness. When a gifted poet starts composition of a poem, the meanings and words come to him easily and they are immediately used by him even

before thinking of them. When he finishes his work, he becomes the first to admire it. The ancestors imagined that behind every poet, and inside him, there was a goddess or a devil of poetry who inspired him to say whatever he had said. The same applies to musicians. They try to make harmony between tunes and sounds so that they would offer to the people nice musical compositions before which one feels ecstacy and amazement as to how such music had been composed. With the same sensation one reads the great literary works and watches the paintings and sculptures of great artists. If inspiration can be felt in the domain of the arts, so is it in the fields of the sciences and discoveries. No one of the great scientists, explorers or inventors had not attributed his success to inspiration. It was inspiration that had led man to invention or to exploration. For this reason, all the great scientists believe in the existence of inspiration.

Since we believe the poet, the author, the musician and the scientist when they assign their success to inspiration, we, therefore, should not dispute or doubt even for a moment Prophet Muhammad's admission that he had been inspired in all his actions by the power of an unseen Revelation. It is evident that the impression of this Revelation was beyond the level of inspired persons rather than of ordinary people.

Confirmation of Muhammad's Prophethood is Confirmation of all other Prophethoods:

Since rational and scientific analysis necessitates belief in the Muhammadan Revelation, we, consequently, have to believe in all other prophethoods through which

prophets had received certain spiritual revelations from an unseen power. These prophets were sure that this power was that of the Creator. After receiving such revelation, the prophet had to call his people to follow the Divine teachings he had brought them. These teachings were always summed up in belief in God and in the Last Day and what would happen in the next world of reckoning, punishment and reward, either for the good deeds or for the sins man had committed in the worldly life.

If we rest assured that a certain person had really preached such teachings, that he had possessed a high degree of spiritual and moral perfection, and that he had declared himself a prophet and a messenger of the Lord of the Universe, we must have faith in this prophet's message and believe that he had really received Revelation from the Lord of the Universe, espcially after the success of his call, the expansion of his spiritual influence, and the immortality of his teachings.

Unlike any other Scripture, the Holy Quran is unique in establishing this fact. It urges, even forces, its followers to believe in all the messengers without any distinction. It confirms that all of them had derived their spiritual illumination from one Divine Light. These messengers did not appear in a specific period or a certain place. Each one of them lived in a particular place and was sent to a certain community. According to the Quran, «*And there never was a people, without a warner having lived among them (in the past)*». (1) Some of these messengers are famous, and some others are not.

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(1) Surat Fatir: 24 (The Originator)

The latter had gone into oblivion the moment their messages had been transmitted. Some of them had been mentioned in the Quran, and some others were not mentioned directly, but implicitly. The Quran says : «*We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him ; We sent inspiration to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms. Of some apostles We have already told thee the story; of others We have not ; and to Moses God spoke direct ; Apostles who gave good news as well as warning, that mankind, after (the coming) of the apostles, should have no plea against God : For God is Exalted in Power, Wise*». (1)

Science of Comparative Studies of Religions and its Indispensability :

Though the substance of the messages revealed to the various prophets was the same, calling peoples to believe in God and in the Last Day and to do good deeds, yet they had differed immensely in their details. This was due to the variation of environments, of time and of mission. There is no doubt that the teachings of the prophet who had been sent to the Israelites who worshipped and deified the gold, thinking that life meant only accumulation of money and gold, had to differ from those of another prophet who had been sent to a poor community with no one in it having gold or silver, but whose great weaknesses were only poverty, indolence and lack of the desire to work for livelihood. Every age

(1) Surat Al-Nisa' : 163-165 (The Women).

and every community had a message commensurate with its conditions and consciousness. In our previous study of religions we have seen how they had matured from simple and local beliefs derived from the circumstances of each community to great faiths spread all over the world, capable of being universally adopted. Such development and graduation can also be applied to the prophets and messengers.

It is to be noticed that prophets' teachings had been in continuous development and that the latter message had to excel always the former. The Holy Quran had hinted at this question when it said: «*Those apostles We endowed with gifts, some above others. To one of them God spoke; others He raised to degrees (of honour); To Jesus the son of Mary We gave clear (signs), and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit*». (1) The variation in degrees was not related to the prophets' personalities. All of them were of the same rank. Variation was in their messages. These messages had differed in nature, some of them were special, and some others common. Some of them, too, had come late, while others were delivered earlier. It is obvious that the latter message had superseded the former, and not vice versa. Hence, the dissimilarity in the ranks of messengers or, in other words, in the teachings of messengers.

Man Has to Make His Choice:

With trust in all messengers, man is required to choose for himself the teachings which he thinks fit and acceptable to his mind and conscience and are capable

(1) Surat Al-Baqarah: 253 (The Cow).

of meeting the requirements of his time and life. This leads to a vast and comprehensive study of religions which is necessary particularly in the present time when comparison among them became easy after the shrinkage of distances between the East and the West and the close relations established among different nations and peoples. The world has shrinked and become as one nation and, therefore, every scholar, polished and educated man has to choose for himself the principles he finds suitable, correct and fit to reform and perfect human beings.

The time has passed when every community had to keep for itself its conceptions, sciences and religions, opposing anything else contrary to them. The time has also come when all mankind should consider themselves as one nation, believing in one God, following common principles and accepting to be governed by defined principles. This, in fact, is the message of Islam which is the last, the greatest and the most applicative of all other messages.

CHAPTER 7

ISLAM AND OTHER RELIGIONS

Islam and its Excellence over Other Religions — Spread of Islam in Present Times — Spread of Islamic Teachings — Absolute Monotheism — Monotheism in Judaism — Monotheism in Christianity — Three Gods or Trinity? — The Mosque is Different from the Church — Islam is Religion of Universal Brotherhood — Muhammad's Messages to Kings and Emperors — Islam Fraternises and Reconciles other Religions — Faith and Good Deeds — Islam Preserves for Itself the Right of Supervision — Equilibrium Between Spirit and Matter — Social Solidarity in Islam.

Islam and its Excellence over Other Religions:

If a historian makes an accurate study of the various religions adopted in present times, foremost among which are Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Brahmanism, Confucianism and Islam, he will realise that the Islamic principles excel other principles. Such a researcher cannot refrain from expressing his admiration and veneration of this great religion to which all indications augur that it is the brisk faith which is about to cover the whole world.

Spread of Islam in Present Times :

Though the Arabs' power had vanished and their rule decayed and the power of the Muslims evanesced from the world, yet the banner of Islam is still flying. Islam is still invading new hearts and new communities, day after day. It is quite enough for one to peruse the reports of Christian missionaries about the spread of Islam in Africa and India, despite the huge counter-efforts, to realise how Islam and Islamic principles are strong. Though hundreds, even thousands, come over to Islam in British India every day (1), yet not a single Muslim had deserted his religion to embrace Buddhism, Brahmanism or Christianity, the religion of the ruling party. What is happening in India is also taking place in China, East Indies Islands and in any other country where the banner of Islam is flown.

Someone may argue that Islam is spread only among the ancient subjugated nations of the East. But it is noticed that Islam is also penetrating Christian Europe and America (2). Islam is spread there despite the fact that they have prevalence over the Muslims and possess great power and arsenals of weapons. In England, as in Germany, France and Switzerland, there are hundreds

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(1) It is noticed that even after the independence of India and of African countries, the number of converts to Islam is still on the increase.

(2) Al-Ahram of February 28, 1964, the leading Arabic newspaper of Egypt, quoting international news agencies, said that Cassius Clay, the world heavy-weight boxing champion, had embraced Islam on the eve of his great victory over Liston, former world champion. Later, Cassius declared in America that Islam is the religion of peace and human brotherhood.

of people who converted to Islam after study and conviction. The figure may appear small, but one can never find on the other hand even a smaller number of Muslims who had deserted Islam to embrace Christianity despite all the incentives and temptations. Though the number of the Europeans who came over to Islam is small, yet Islam had won the esteem of most of the orientalists who studied it and wrote voluminous books on its excellent characteristics and on the Prophet of Muslims and his great message and teachings. These works are truthful and convincing and the Muslims find in them material which adds to their conviction in their religion and their glorification of their Prophet. No other evidence is required to show how has Islam spread under the shadow of the sciences and modern civilisation.

Spread of Islamic Teachings:

The great victory of Islam is marked by the spread of its principles and teachings all over the civilised world. There, they unintentionally apply the very principles of Islam. They are wholly contained in the present enacted laws of Europe and America. (1) They are as much nearer to Islam as they are remote from Christianity. Despite the distorted picture the Muslims themselves give to Islam, Islam goes forward, winning new adherents; and this is an evidence of its complete suitability and excellence over other religions which shrink and fade by the passage of time, by the spread of the sciences and learning, and by the advancement of mankind.

(3) An example is divorce, which is prohibited by Christianity, but allowed in Islam.

Absolute Monotheism :

The first characteristic of Islam is its frank, clear and strong call for absolute and complete monotheism, which is in conformity with the correct and mature concept about God, the Creator. According to Islam, God is transcendent, is above all material limitations. He is far above being incarnated in His creatures, or from being seen, heard, rather than touched. God has no beginning or end. He has no partner or parallel. He is One, on Whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And none is like Him. He is the Absolute Perfection, the Willing, the Doer of what He intends without movement or emotion. He is the Creator, the Maker. the Fashioner, the First, the Last, the Manifest, the Hidden. He is the First Cause, the Secret, the Spirit, the Lord, the Regulator of the Universe. His nature cannot be conceived by human mind nor would His shape be imagined. Nothing is like Him ; and He is the Hearing, the Seeing.

Islam, or in other words Muhammad Ibn Abdullah, had elevated Divinity to an unprecedented degree of perfection, monotheism and transcendence. Muhammad had declared a violent war against polytheism with its symbols of statues, idols, temples, priests and rites. Idols had been destroyed and images obliterated. Under Islam, the human mind was liberated from humility and enslavement and cleared of fancies and myths. Man's dignity and prestige had gone up and man discontinued to prostrate himself before a stone, a tree, an animal, an idol or a human being. Islam had succeeded in what other religions had failed. The Muslim countries had detached themselves from the sacrificial priest

and temple, and peoples' foreheads did not bow in worship except to the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting, Who has no image or place. Prayers were not said except for God, the Most High, the Possessor of power over all things, the Controller over the earth and the heavens. Not a religion had purged itself from the blemishes of idolatry as Islam had done. The churches of the Catholic Christians are full, even in the age of enlightment and learning, of images, statues and idols, before which the Christians bow in adoration, believing that they bow before a picture of the alive god represented in a man crucified on a cross, weltering in his blood, or before a saint with very long beard and pink cheeks. When the Eastern churches freed themselves from this sort of idolatry, they did that under the influence of Islamic communities and teachings.

Much can be said of the temples of the Buddhists, of the Brahmans, and of other faiths. They represent idolatry in its first naive stages. No religion other than Islam had detached itself from the temple and the worship of god represented in an idol. To Islam, the whole world is a mosque where God is worshipped. The Prophet used to say : «To me, the whole land is a mosque suitable for worship». Whenever the prayers are due, one can say them at any place he finds himself in, and his prayers immediately go to God. This is a result of the belief in pure monotheism and transcendence of Divinity beyond anthropomorphose, personification and incarnation. In this regard, Islam excels all other religions, even those which adopt the same idea of monotheism

Monotheism in Judaism:

Judaism, for instance, like Islam, believes in one God. But the god of the Jews does not differ much from any other god of ancient peoples. It is like that of the Greeks, of the Romans or of the ancient Egyptians all of which descended to the earth, incarnated in an image of a human being and mixed and dealt with people. These gods had fought with men and sometimes he had defeated them. In the Torah, there is a clear text which explains how Jacob had struggled with god but without being defeated by him. God, despite this, had changed Jacob's name to that of Israel, an indication that he had struggled and prevailed against god and against the people too. (1)

The Torah portrays god as a well-made human being with all man's emotions and defects. He errs, repents, stumbles, blushes and regrets. Above all, he is in

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(1) Genesis: 32 says: «And Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and Jacob's thigh was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, 'Let me go, for the day is breaking'. But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me'. And he said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob'. Then he said, 'Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven God and with men, and have prevailed. Then Jacob asked him, 'Tell me, I pray, your name'. But he said, 'Why is it that you ask my name?' And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the name of the place Penuel, saying, 'For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.' The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his thigh. Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh, because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh on the sinew of the hip.»

need of man as man is in need of him. The Torah, talking of god, describes him as the lord of the soldiers who led the Israelite armies to victory and used to march always in the vanguard. But by the passage of time, these notions had developed with the result that the later generations of ancient times had started to talk about god in a way bringing him nearer to transcendence and perfection. But still, the Torah's concept of god remained in observation. To the Torah, god is the lord of the Israelites. They are his chosen and favoured nation. Relation between the Israelites and god is represented in the covenant god had made with Abraham, their first grandfather. According to this covenant, the Israelites had to worship god and become his favoured nation, and in return, he will allow them to inhabit the land of promise, Palestine, after filling it with butter and honey.

Even in our present time, Zionism claims Palestine and wants to make of it a national homeland for the Jews after usurping its lands from its Arab legitimate owners who inhabited the country for thousands of years. The Jews have not any legal right to make this daring claim except the alleged covenant made between their grandfather and god. (1)

It is needless to say that all this had been the result of idolatry which is still practised by the Jews who had derived the idea from the old Torah.

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(1) It is known that the Jews had already established the state of Israel in Palestine. This was in conformity with their unaccepted idea.

Therefore, Judaism can never keep up with Islam in its belief in monotheism and transcendence of god against anthropomorphose and incarnation.

Monotheism in Christianity:

The same idea of monotheism and the same defects afflicting Judaism are doing the same to Christianity. When we study Christianity, we immediately find ourselves face to face with a person crucified on a cross, with blood weltering from his wounds, pain mirrored on his face, and a crown of thorns is put on his head. According to Christianity, one has to believe that this image is that of the living god before which man has to bow.

The idea of god's incarnation in the body of Jesus Christ, son of Mary, had created basic problems in the early Christian era. There was blood-shed and the Christians were divided into two factions, each one trying to exterminate the other. The difference subject concentrated on the transfiguration of Christ — whether his body was similar to other bodies and thus would evanesce and decompose after he had been raised alive to heavens, or he had been an immaculate godly image which would not evanesce or decompose. In other words, the difference subject dealt with whether Jesus, son of Mary, was, while mixing up with people, a god personified in a body of a human being, thus, having two natures, one of a god in substance, and the other of man in form, or merely a god. These discussions and differences had exhausted the early Christians and resulted in massacres which dwarfed the massacres and

persecution they had been exposed to at the hands of idolators.

Three Gods or Trinity?

But the nature of Christ and the theory of divinity and human nature were not the only problems which had confronted the Christian faith. The problem of Trinity was not of less gravity. This problem still constitutes the major cause which compels the educated Christians to desert Christianity.

The Christ's disciples, particularly Paul, had proclaimed publicly that Christ was god's son, and the Father, being the chief god, and the Holy Ghost, being a third god. These teachings were the traces of the ancient religious beliefs which had undoubtedly prevailed over the world of that time, foremost among which was Egypt's triad, Isis, Osiris and Horus. The differences which took place among the early Christians were about the rank of the three gods — whether they were equal or would the son be preceded by the father because he was the first cause, or the holy ghost to be preceded by the son?

After the clashes, complete and absolute equality among the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost was made.

Hence, the Christians found themselves confronting the problem of polytheism, the idea which Christianity had been introduced to eradicate. But the result was different; they said that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, i.e., the Holy Trinity, were all in one. In other words, they were three qualities, or images, of one

truth, exactly as in our saying the sun, the light of the sun, and the disc of the sun, which finally means the sun itself. It was then logical that since the Christians had accepted the idea that the Trinity was a different name for god, the one, they should have discontinued talking about Trinity, the question which upsets peoples' minds till this day.

This cannot be compared with the simplicity of the Islamic faith and the purity of Islamic monotheism. According to Islam, the Unity of God is beyond doubt and a fact which accepts no disputation or misconstruction. God is the Creative, the Fashioning and the Controlling power. He is the First Cause and deemed above having a son or a father. He is higher than to be likened to a creature or to be seen. He exists everywhere and is non-existent in anywhere. He is Infinite, Absolute.

If Christianity and Judaism, and both are institutional religions, fail to provide humanity with pure monotheism as Islam does, it is then futile to talk about the other religions which are more reactionary than Christianity or Judaism.

Brahmanism might have observed a kind of absolute monotheism and included it in some of its texts, but these texts are about to be over-shadowed by the other texts which deal with an assembly of gods. It is natural that the monotheist texts are lost among the rites and temples and by priests' authority. This subject leads us to discuss the second characteristic of Islam.

Islam's Cancellation of the Church, the Temple and Priesthood:

All the Islamic teachings had jointly protected the lofty belief of monotheism. As a result, Islam had been

able to introduce to mankind the greatest reform they had yearned for. It had liberated them from the yoke of the clergy. It abolished the temple with its religious rites and made worship a sort of intellect, conventional rules of behaviour, good manners and proper treatment. Islam had cleared worship of all the rites and intimidation of other religions. These were responsible for establishing of priests' authority and for supplying them with the dreadful weapon of interceding between god and human beings. It was for the priests to screen god from people or to establish contact between both. All the ancient faiths had depended on the temple, or the house of god, and this was a natural result of their imagination that god could be incarnated in one of his creatures. Since any temple was in need of someone to look after its maintainance and to offer sacrifices, the class of the clergy had been gradually formed. They began their work as servants for the gods, then became their ministers and assistants who helped in disposal of affairs. Gods were said to have been trying to please them. There is no wonder then if the clergy had changed into a holy class who took in its hands the destiny of people. People had to approach them in a bid to come nearer to gods. In order to obtain gods' pleasure and satisfaction, the people had to please the priests. Anyone who could not get the blessings of the priests had to suffer because soon the gods had to punish and throw their curse on him. This priestly domination is the feature of all ancient religions except Confucianism. (1) This pre-

(1) Under the basic teachings of Confucianism there is no special class of clergy. Worships are practised by everyone and some of its rites are practised by the state's civilian servants. They perform them in addition to other routine work.

valance was one of the plagues which deprived peoples over thousands of years of their liberty, making of them servants and slaves subservient to the whims, desires and arbitration of priests. The story of the Christian priests in the Middle Ages may be the best example of people who created an atmosphere of terrorism. The Pope, the head of the Church, was the greatest personality in Europe. He used to force the kings and emperors to submit to him. The story of Canosa is well known. The Emperor of Germany left his capital to have an audience with the Pope in Italy. He travelled bare-footed and stood at his door for days and weeks, his face covered with dust, wearing the attire of repentance. He came to the Pope to get his forgiveness, but the Pope did not grant him this privilege. The Pope used to issue Papal interdictions even to a whole country, and here, the priests had to discontinue immediately practising religious rites. They had to stop baptising children, thus, depriving them of becoming Christians. The priests were not allowed in such a case to make any marriage contract, thus, encouraging people to live in adultery. They, too, had not to pray before a bier, thus, preventing the dead from entering Paradise, having their abode only in Hell. The tale of the indulgence papers, which were sold to people like tickets of cinema houses or theatres, is well-established. The priests' resistance to the development of sciences and intellect was the order of the day in the Middle Ages. They consumed the gifted people by fire, after charging them with apostasy and disbelief. The inquisition tribunals, with their horrors, were the product of such priestly tyranny. The Crusades had broken out because of the priests. Last and not the least,

the disaster which befell the civilisation and mankind in Andalusia was the result of priests' endeavours to instigate the people against the Muslims. The massacres which took place among the Protestant Christians and the Catholics, which were the shame of history, were prompted at the instructions of the clergy.

It was strange that the priests and popes had become the richest class in Europe while they were supposed to be representing Christ who considered poverty the peak of worship and token of conviction. It is also strange that till now, the Pope in Rome lives in palaces the walls and furniture of which are made almost of gold and inlaid with jewels.

The Mosque is Different from the Church:

Islam is completely free from the blemishes which despoil Christianity and other world religions. It had detached itself from the sacrificial priest and the temple. To it, God is above everyone, and everyone is His servant. He is near to any suppliant who calls Him. God requires no mediator. Man is to simply call his Lord, and the Lord will answer him. The sincere yearning of man's soul to get nearer and nearer to God is always accepted. Worship in Islam is nothing but to contemplate the Universe and to do good deeds, in complete disregard for time and place. Prayers, for instance, are accepted whenever and wherever they are said, whether on a road, in open air, in a desert, in a field or inside a house. One has nothing to do in this connection than to turn his face towards God, and God will turn His

face to him. According to the Quran, «*To God belong the East and the West; uhithersoever ye turn, there is the Presence of God. For God is All-Pervading, All-Knowing*». (1) The whole Universe is a place for worshipping God. When Islam asked for building of mosques and recommended saying prayers in them, it wanted the mosques to become places for meetings at which the Muslims would discuss and exchange views and extend assistance to each other, in complete social cooperation and solidarity. This is the role the mosque plays in the Islamic life failing which the mosque loses its merit as mosque. In Islam, the mosque is a place of reunion and an institute, and not a temple or a church. The mosque is not a place without which worship would not be made. Anyone can learn Islam easily. To know and learn it is the duty of everyone, male or female, slave or free. Everyone has access to the Quran, and no one can monopolise its interpretation. Anyone who knows reading can read the Quran. Anyone who possesses the faculty of understanding can understand it. If the reader of the Quran seeks help of someone who is more learned than himself, the action is advisable because it is preferable that one gets correct instruction on the Quran from competent scholars. This is contrary to what is practised by other religions which confine reading and explaining of holy books only to the priests and official men of religion.

Islam had liberated man's mind which must not submit except to its own dictates. It had also freed the

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(1) Surat Al-Baqarah : 115. (The Cow)

lives of Muslims from the tyranny of priests and bishops and made all the Muslims equal. To Islam, an Arab is not superior to a non-Arab except by piety.

This, again, leads us to the study of the third characteristic of Islam, that is, its equalisation between peoples, irrespective of their race, colour, nationality or faculty. With this, Islam is rightly taken as a universal religion.

Islam is Religion of Universal Brotherhood:

Since more than thirteen centuries, Islam had tried to reach standards of perfection which the present civilised world is seeking to reach. It had preceded the present world in asking peoples to unite and cancel all barriers.

Before Communism, Islam had preached fraternity among workers. And before the introduction of present socialism and democracy, which vie with Communism in taking the lead of economic progress, Islam had laid the foundation of true socialism and democracy. Attempts are now being made to unite the various parts of the world by planes, wireless, television and atomic energy, while Islam, many centuries ago, had asked for the same and appealed to different peoples to unite.

The Islamic Call was made at a time when the prisoner of war was to be killed. The free people of any country had treated their slaves, even their sons and wives, as a herd of cattle or animals. They were authorised to dispose of them by sale, hire or lease. The destiny of these people was in their masters' hands; they would survive or vanish according to their whims. Islam

came at a time when even the members of a family were divided into two classes, one enjoying all the privileges, and the other denied all the human rights. In these circumstances, Islam came with its unprecedented Call for universal brotherhood and complete equality among peoples, irrespective of their being white or black, free or slaves, males or females, Arabs or non-Arabs. In this, as in other domains, Islam had excelled all other calls. No other religion in the world had called for human brotherhood and cancelled racial discrimination. In our study of the history of religions we have seen how religion was a sort of local culture, how it was closely connected with the society, and how each people had considered itself the sole, the favoured and the chosen one.

Neither Judaism nor Christianity had been free from this fault. The Israelis, as mentioned before, had talked about god as if he was theirs alone and if they had been chosen by him to have the upper hand on any other nation. Since the Israelis were the offspring of this privileged family, the Israeli religion had become the nationality of a race which thought of itself as being different from any other race.

If we go through the Gospel, we find that Christianity itself was originally a local religion which had no connection with the rest of the world's peoples and hardly cared for them. In the different Gospels, Christ describes himself as a corrector and interpreter of the Old Testament and the guide to the Israelis alone. As regards the first attribute, he says : «Think not that I am come to destroy the law, but to fulfil». With the law here, Christ meant the Old Testament, or the Torah. He warned his disciples not to preach their teachings

except to the Israelis. He said: «Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel». (1) Christ had gone further. He let down a Canaanite woman who came to him with a complaint that she had been treated differently because she was not an Israelite, and because he was said to be sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Gospel says: «But he answered and said: It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it into thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour». (2)

This story shows that Jesus had confined his call to the Israelites and that he cared not for any other nation or people. When Christianity had become later a universal religion, this was done only by the Christ's disciples, particularly Paul, who was one of the disciples who had never met or seen the Christ. However, Christianity could not practically remove racial differences or unite the peoples on the basis of religion. Till now, Christian Europe and America treat the negroes as a degraded race who could not be raised to the level of the whites even if they had acquired the highest degrees of learning and station. The majority of British, too, do not allow the non-whites to enter their homes. Any man with a brown face is slighted by the British, whatever

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(1) St. Matthew: 10.
(2) Ibid: 24-28.

great this man might be. Before the second world war, we have seen how the Germans had fanatically sided with the white Aryan race and how they had made Aryanism a basis of their social, economic, political and spiritual life. The Christian principles could not remove from their souls blind and hated fanaticism. As regards the behaviour of the British in India and the Americans' treatment of the negroes in America, this is known to everyone. The Americans isolate the negroes in special ghettos and impose on them many restrictions which prevent them from frequenting the places of the whites or from attending their meetings. Such racial discrimination is not allowed by Islam and is not practised in Muslim societies. The Holy Prophet, by his personal actions on one hand, and the Islamic teachings on the other, had removed for ever from the hearts of the Muslims any racial or communal feeling and any extravagant zeal for any nationalism or colour.

Muhammad's message, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, was meant for all mankind. He had never confined an address to his own countrymen. He had never praised the Arab race in particular nor showed preference to a certain nation. When the Quran addresses peoples, it talks to all of them. It orders : «*Say : O, men ; I am sent unto you all, as the Apostle of God*». (1) It also states : «*We have not sent thee but as a universal (Messenger) to men, giving them glad tidings, and warning them (against sin)*». (2)

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(1) Surat Al-'Araf : 158 (The Heights)
(2) Surat Saba' : 28.

It is to be noted that when the Quran speaks in a general term, it addresses mankind at large, and when it addresses only the Muslims, who believed in Muhammad's Call, it addresses them as the «believers».

Muhammad's Messages to Kings and Emperors :

When Muhammad settled in Medina, he sent his envoys to all the countries of the old world asking their heads to convert to his right religion. He sent envoys to the Chosro of Persia, to Caesar, to the Coptic Archbishop of Egypt, and to other rulers and leaders. By such action, he proved that the Muhammadan Call was not regional or racial, but universal. Later, the Quranic verses were revealed consecutively calling for equality among the believers, stating that superiority of one over another depends only on the dutiful observance of commission and doing of good deeds. The Quran says : «*O mankind ; We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you*». (1) A Prophetic saying endorses this verse. It says that no Arab is superior to any non-Arab unless it be in virtue and piety. Piety, therefore, or the good deeds, is the basis of preference and superiority in the worldly life. Occasionally, the Quran reminds peoples of their origin and recalls that peoples had come from one male and one female, Adam and Eve, and, therefore, they must be brothers to each other. It urges all peoples to conduct

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(1) Surat Al-Hujurat : 13.

their own affairs, to deal with each other, and to show kindness to everyone, on the basis of universal brotherhood.

The Quran reminds: «*O mankind; reverence your Guardian-Lord, Who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; Reverence God, through Whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you); for God ever watches over you*». (1) It is clear from this passage that Islam calls for universal human brotherhood on the basis of relationship.

During his life-time, Prophet Muhammad made it a point to bring near him the followers who had believed in him and did good deeds, without paying notice to their race or colour. Among those who were very close to him were Bilal, the Abyssinian, Salman, the Persian, and Suhaib, the Roman. Abou Sufyan, the great leader of the Quraish tribe, had remarked that whenever Bilal had asked for an audience with 'Umar, the Caliph of the Muslims, he was granted permission immediately, while he himself had not been granted the same unless Bilal took leave of 'Umar. In this, 'Umar had been following the practice of his leader Muhammad Ibn Abdullah, the greatest of all mankind, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, when he used to accord Bilal due respect, paying no regard of his black colour or station. Abou Zarr narrates that one day he quarelled with Bilal and called him (the son of a negro». When the Prophet was

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(1) Surat Al-Nisa': 1 (The Women).

informed of the story, he expressed his disapproval and enquired from Abou Zarr, «Have you really called his mother in names?» He replied: «Yes». The Prophet said: «You are still being influenced by the traditions of days of Ignorance». The Prophet did not find a way to express his indignation except in describing Abou Zarr as a man who was still practising bad manners. This was sufficient to deprive Abou Zarr of the attributions of a true Muslim. Whenever the Prophet went to the Ka'bah to preach Islam, the meeting was attended, among others, by slaves and inferior people. The nobles of Quraish disapproved and boycotted such gatherings and told Muhammad that if he wanted them to attend his meetings he had to dismiss this class of people. The Prophet was about to respond to their request, had it not been for the Quran which prohibited him from doing so and blamed him for the idea.

Islam had made of all the Muslims one nation. The Quran says: «*Verily, this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood*». (1) It also considered the whole world as a home for Muslims, that is, making of the whole world one nation. The practicability of this call could be clearly witnessed in the pilgrimage season when masses of Muslims meet and circumambulate the Ka'bah praying and magnifying the Lord. They come from the four corners of the globe, and from all races. Among them there are the white, the red, the black, the yellow and the brown. Among them are the princes and the poor, males and females. They are Persians, Indians,

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(1) Surat Al-Anbiya': 92 (The Prophets).

Arabs, Turks or Hungarians. They are also either no-mades or urbanes. Not only this, Islam had united all the pilgrims in everything and made them equal even in their dress. On this occasion, they put off their national dresses, or any other dress, and put on only a white cloth which covers the private parts of their body, thus, removing any distinction of rank or class.

Islam, therefore, is the religion of the whole world. It is the religion of human brotherhood. It brings different races and colours in harmony. It is the religion that urges peoples to live together in peace and amity, regardless of their distant environments, races, colours and faiths. And that is the fourth characteristic which no religion other than Islam can claim.

Islam Fraternises and Reconciles Different Religions:

Though Islam treats all mankind, irrespective of their colour, race and social status, as brothers, yet it will not achieve the final goal, the universal human fraternity, unless it accepts and esteems other religions' teachings. There was nothing divisive more than variation of faiths and the disapproval by some of them of others' principles. Such a thing had taken place in olden times. Sometimes, because of difference in faith, people of one nation had been divided among themselves. Even among the followers of a certain religion, or the people of one country, there was blood-shed merely because one faction had believed in a creed different from the creed of the other factions. But when Islam came, it dealt with peoples and faiths differently. It called for harmony and reconciliation among all religions. Islam holds all prophets in high esteem. It held forth that religion is one,

in all times and climes. To Islam, all the religions aim at one object — to establish the belief in the Unity of God and the necessity of coming nearer to Him through good deeds. This, in fact, was the call of every prophet or messenger. If religions appear to be different and their teachings contradictory, that was the making of the priests and professional religionists who exploited religion to serve their own ends and to enjoy power and collect fortunes. It was the priests who were responsible for the variation, additions and misconstructions which afflicted the pure substance of religions and gave them their various texts. Jesus Christ, for instance, was a prophet, like Muhammad. He called for the Unity of God and for worshipping Him sincerely and honestly. Not even once had he not told the people that he was God's servant and prophet. If the later generations had made of him god, the fault was not of Christ, the innocent and the free of guilt, or of Christianity which is as pure as Islam, but of the priests who perverted the religion by allegorical interpretation and put out the light of truth by their tricks so that they could serve their own interest and satisfy their passions. The same applies to the Mosaic religion preached by Moses, may God's peace be upon him. This religion is not different from Islam, and the deviation of the Jews was the result of their rabbis' working. The Scripture the Jews attribute to the Heavens is not the real book; it had been misconstrued and altered. Abraham had preached teachings identical to those of Islam, and so were Noah, Hud, Saleh, Joseph, Elisha, Zul Kifl, Idris, Yahya, Zakariya, and all other prophets, the known and the unknown, who were either mentioned or not mentioned in the Quran. All these prophets had called the people to

believe in one eternal Truth, the Truth of belief in God, the One, to Whom one could not come nearer except through good deeds.

This is the theme of Islam and this is its attitude towards other religions. No other teachings require from their followers to venerate other faiths or sacred books or prophets and no similar approach could be made by any other religion. After these Muhammadan directives and Divine decrees no Muslim dares not to pray and venerate Jesus, Abraham or Moses. The Christian and the Jew will undoubtedly feel pleased on seeing a Muslim revering their prophets. In this way, Islam fraternises and reconciles religions, which, it believes, spring from one immaculate source.

In this, Islam had in fact shown that it was the last of all religions and that Muhammad was really the seal of all prophets. Such reconciliation could not be undertaken except by the religion which came of late. After such reconciliation, there was no need for a new religion as there was no part left to play in life. After Islam's call for reconciliation, peace and amity, any other new religion would not have brought save new differences and divisions.

The following Quranic passage revealed in this connection shows that this Book could never have been written by a human being filled with prejudice, but by the Originator of the Universe and Creator of man. It says: «*Say ye: We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord; We make no*

difference between one and another of them; and we bow to God (in Islam)». (1)

This passage enumerates the names of some messengers. It talks about prophets in general. The Quran demands of every Muslim to venerate any prophet and refrain from dispraising him lest he might really be a true prophet. Therefore, any Muslim should not belittle the worthiness and calibre of Zoroaster of Persia, Confucius of China, Buddha of India or Ikhnaton of Egypt lest they might be of those messengers the Quran had not mentioned. The Quran says: «*Of some Apostles We have already told thee the story; of others We have not.*» (2)

Since this is the outlook of the Muslim towards the prophets of other religions, there should certainly be understanding, cooperation and friendship between him and any person of any other religion. A Muslim may find in the teachings of other religions something contrary to his belief in monotheism and its affiliated subjects, but he should refrain from criticising the messenger or the scripture of that religion. He ascribes the contrariety only to the differences which took place in later years and to the persons who had played with the religion. If the followers of other religions really like to correct and purge their religions from blemishes, they can do that liberally and voluntarily in the light of the Islamic principles which call for right and truth.

Islam demands of its followers not to argue with other religions' followers roughly. The Quran says: «*And*

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(1) Surat Al-Baqarah : 136
(2) Surat Al-Nisa' : 164

dispute ye not with the people of the Book except with means better (than mere disputation)». (1) By this, the Quran wants the pious to be brothers of each other though they often differ in religion. It asks them not to pass quick judgements or to imitate the other religions' followers who deny the existence of any good in any other faith. The Quran says : «*The Jews say, 'The Christians have naught (to stand) upon'; and the Christians say, 'The Jews have naught (to stand) upon.' Yet they (profess to) study the (same) Book like unto their word is what those say who know not, but God will judge between them in their quarrel on the Day of Judgement*». (2)

Belief and Good Deeds :

Not only had Islam eradicated fanaticism against other religions from the hearts of the Muslims, but laid down a rule for reconciliation between the Muslims and the followers of other religions. This rule is to be pursued by he who desires to come near to God and be worthy of getting His blessings. The rule can be summed up in a few words, to have true conviction in God and to do good deeds. Anyone, be he Muslim, Christian, Jew or follower of any other religion, is entitled to a goodly reward if he has true belief in God and does good deeds in the world. The Quran says : «*Those who believe (in the Quran), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians, and who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righ-*

(1) Surat Al-'Ankabut : 46 (The Spider).
(2) Surat Al-Baqarat : 113.

teousness, shall have their reward with their Lord. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve». (1) This same verse is repeated in the Quran more than once and has become a basic rule in Islam. On the strength of this rule Islam had enacted a law which allows the Muslim to marry a woman from any other religion based on a revealed book. After being married, such a woman is not to be asked to convert to Islam, her husband's faith, unless if she so desires. If she does not like to convert to Islam voluntarily, she can keep her original religion. She is permitted to do so though she lives with a Muslim husband and is a mother of his Muslim children. The Quran says: «*This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the people of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) who are believers, but chaste women among the people of the Book, revealed before your time, when ye give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness*». (2)

Mere adherence to Islam, unlike other religions, is not sufficient for salvation. Salvation is the result of conviction and good deeds. In this regard, variation of religions do not count. The Quran ordains: «*Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it. And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it*». (3) Every follower of any religion based on a revealed book will be treated exactly as the Muslim. People will be shown their works in the Re-

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(1) Surat Al-Baqarah.

(2) Surat Al-Ma'idah : 5.

(3) Surat Al-Zalzalah : 6-8 (The Convulsion).

surrection Day by being made to taste of their fruits. The following Quranic passage is self-explanatory: «*Of the people of the Book are a portion that stand (for the right); they rehearse the signs of God all night long, and then prostrate themselves in adoration. They believe in God and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they (hasten in emulation) in (all) good works. They are in the ranks of the righteous. Of the good that they do, nothing will be rejected of them; for God knoweth well those that do right*». (1)

Islam Keeps to Itself the Right of Supervision :

One may object that since Islam venerates other religions and respects their followers, and since it treats the Muslims and other religions' followers equally, its mission in clearing these religions of myths and superstitions should have been repealed. But the fact is that Islam had been tolerant with other religions because it desires to correct them and convince their adherents of its supervision over these religions, stressing that it had superseded all previous faiths. Islam had carried out this task successfully. Many people of other religions had come over to it after being convinced of its liberal methods and the freedom it gives to everyone to remain adhering to his original faith without molestation. Restraint and persecution always lead to pertinaciousness. With tolerance, different viewpoints could be exchanged and reconciled. Had Islam stultified other religions, looking down upon their sacred books and prophets, no one would have listened to its Call or

(1) Surat Al-Imran (113-115).

been attracted to it. Islam's attitude towards other religions and prophets is an empirical evidence that it is the religion of Truth and that the Quran is God's Book. Islam treats these religions kindly. Islam is the instructor, not the boastful and the arbitrary arrogant. Because Islam is the absolute Truth, it will always be victorious. It spreads extensively wherever people's souls are free from prejudice and fanaticism and man's mind of pressure from leaders, kings, politicians and priests. Therefore, there is no harm if Islam recognises other religions' sacred books and promises the followers of other faiths rewards for the good deeds they had done. Islam treats all peoples, of all faiths, equally; it treats them as God's servants. What is the harm if everyone in the world believes in God's justice and in His reward or punishment in the next world for the good or the bad deeds he had done in this world. Such idea can never be disputed.

Since these are the principles of Islam, this religion must really be a true and righteous faith. When the followers of other religions based on revealed Books had carefully studied this new religion and its principles and teachings, they found that it contained the cream of what they themselves possessed and that it had no defects the like of which their religions had suffered from. Islam asks everyone to come to its fold because it is the last and the most perfect of all religions. It had superseded all other faiths. Great numbers of people had converted to Islam willingly and happily. A century after the advent of Islam, the number of converts from Christianity and other religions reached one hundred

million. Had it not been for Islam's tolerance, these people would not have adopted it. (1)

Tolerance was the characteristic of the Islamic state and it was practised in an unprecedented way. The Muslim society encompassed followers of other religions all of whom enjoyed the same rights and duties of the Muslims. Not even once had religion prevented any citizen from occupying any post a Muslim was entitled to. From the non-Muslims there were ministers, army commanders, scientists, physicians, men of letter, poets and scholars. During all their life, which was fraught with persecution, the Jews had never enjoyed peace and security as they had enjoyed under the Muslims rule. Their history in Andalusia is known to everyone.

Some of the Muslims who rebelled against the rulers, (Al-Khawarij), had gone to the extreme that the idolator, the Christian, the Jew and the magus had enjoyed

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(1) Humanity had never known a tolerant ruler like 'Umar. When he entered Jerusalem victoriously and visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, accompanied by the Christian patriarch who gave him the keys of the city, the prayers were due. The patriarch asked him to say them in the Church. 'Umar regretted and gave his historical reply: «I fear that once I said my prayers in this Church, the coming generations of Muslims would say that in this place 'Umar had said his prayers and, therefore, it has to be transferred to a mosque. I want the Church to remain a Church.» Then, 'Umar went to a yard opposite the Church where he said his prayers. As was predicted by 'Umar, the later Muslims built in that yard a mosque and called it after his name. Till now, the mosque faces the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which is a few strides from it. This shows that the early Muslims had understood Islam substantially. They realised that it had been introduced to the world as a religion of mercy, fraternity and peace, not of conflict, quarrel and injustice.

peace and security more than the Muslim. Any Muslim who happened to be met and forestalled by any rebel would prefer to pretend to be a Christian or a Jew rather than being a Muslim. By so doing, the Muslim wanted to save himself from the wickedness of the rebel who would not spare him or show him any tolerance or leniency. The rebel did not like the Muslim who did not agree with him on political issues. The rebel would leave whoever differed with him in religion unmolested, even if he was a polytheist. In this, the rebel had been following the Quran's instructions : «*If one amongst the pagans ask thee for asylum, grant it to him, so that he may hear the Word of God; and then escort him to where he can be secure. That is because they are men without knowledge*». (1)

Islam had cleared the Muslims' hearts of fanaticism against the followers of other religions and instructed all the Muslims to respect them. It also asked them to cooperate with them and treat them equally, provided they reciprocate the same feeling. Thus, the humanity had learned for the first time in its long history the real meaning of tolerance which no religion other than Islam, even Christianity which is based on love, had imbued in its followers' hearts. In this regard it is sufficient to draw a comparison between the brutalities and cruelty committed by the Crusaders in the Middle Ages in the name of the Cross, and the kindness and tolerance Saladdin had shown to the Crusaders after defeating

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(1) Surat Al-Tawbah : 6 (Repentance)

them. This, of course, was a natural result of the Islamic teachings. (1)

The Middle Course — Equilibrium Between Spirit and Matter :

Describing the Muslims, the Holy Quran says: «*Thus, have We made of you an 'Ummat' (Nation) justly balanced*». (2) In olden times, Aristotle defined virtue as being the middle course between two extremes. Moderation in everything is one of the unique characteristics of Islam. It is for its moderation that Islam had flourished and progressed. It is also for its moderation that it remains a flexible religion capable of adapting itself to the perpetual dynamic life.

Islam wants everyone to follow a middle course in the worldly life. One should not be intent on the delights of life nor must abandon them completely. To Islam, there should be a middle course between realism and idealism and between the requirements of material life and happiness of the soul. Unlike Hinduism or monasticism, whether Christian or Buddhist, Islam is a religion which seeks no torture of the body or restrain of

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(1) Had not Buddhism, known for its sublime teachings and endeavoure to realise human perfection, been confined to lay down only a system for human behaviour, it would have been set as a good example of religious tolerance. If what is attributed to Buddha is true, he must have forgotten that religious principles could not be established firmly unless if they were derived from a belief in a perfect god. This was the reason why his followers had tried to fill the gap in Buddhism by regarding Buddha himself a god. Though there is a faction of Buddhists who do not believe in the divinity of Buddha, yet they treat him as a deity. For him they build temples, idols and statues, and to him they offer prayers and roses and perfumes.

(2) Surat Al-Baqarah : 2.

passion which other religions pretend to be leading to purification and loftiness of the spirit. On the other hand, Islam does not approve the desires of the body which do not aim except to satisfy lust and passions. Islam had laid down rules to govern the lawful and legitimate desires and passions of man. By so doing, Islam wants man's spirit and soul to be free, and not strangled.

In the Quran are many verses which guide man to a proper middle course in life.

Regularisation of Money Expenditure :

Contrary to some religions which find fault with money, such as Christianity and Buddhism, Islam likes man to have money, but warns against prodigality.

The Quran warns : «*To those weak of understanding, make not over your money which God has made a means of support for you*». (1)

This Quranic verse states that money is the backbone of man's life. He must not fritter away or waste it. To the Quran, the true believers, when spending money, are «*those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes)*». (2)

The Quran condemns the extravagant as well as the avaricious. It orders : «*Make not thy hand tied (like a niggard's) to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost*

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(1) Surat Al-Nisa' : 5 (The Women).
(2) Surat Al-Furqan : 67 (The Criterion).

reach, so that thou become blameworthy and destitute». (1) Two verses before this passage, the Quran states: «*Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the devils; and the devil is to his Lord ungrateful*». (2)

Therefore, there is no harm in collecting money, but through lawful and legitimate means. Expenditure, on the other hand, must be made properly. Money must be expended on everything which seeks the welfare, the good, and the reform of mankind. According to the Quran, «*those who (in charity) spend of their goods by night and by day, in secret and in public, have their reward with their Lord. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve*». (3)

The Quran also says: «*The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of God is that of a grain of corn; it groweth seven ears, and each ear hath a hundred grains. God giveth manifold increase to whom He pleaseth. And God careth for all, and He knoweth all things*». (4)

In the Quran is a number of verses all of which call for spending money for the common benefit and threaten those who hoard gold and silver with heavy penalty.

Moreover, Islam levies a tax on the total assets of everyone to be given to the destitute. This subject will be studied in detail on talking later about (Zakat), the poor-rate.

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(1) Surat Al-Isra' : 29 (The Ascention)
(2) Ibid : 27.
(3) Surat Al-Baqarah : 274.
(4) Ibid : 261.

From this, it appears how Islam takes a middle course as regards the gravest issue which is confronting mankind, namely, the issue of accumulating and disposal of money.

Islam's Call for Enjoyment of Life's Gifts:

The Quran, before any other call, had asked for improving the lot of people and allowed them to enjoy life's gifts. Islam prefers that everyone has a clean residence, appropriate cloth and food, and adequate livelihood. It also requires all people to be strong, wealthy and healthy.

The Quran orders: «*Eat of the good things that We have provided for you*» (1) and «*Eat of the things which God hath provided for you*». (2)

The Quran asks man to wear clothes that add to his grace. It says: «*O, Children of Adam; wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer*». (3)

The Quran condemns those who try to deny the people God's gifts. It says, «*O, ye who believe; make not unlawful the good things which God hath made lawful for you*» (4) and «*Say: Who hath forbidden the beautiftl (gifts) of God, which He hath produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He hath provided) for sustenance*». (5)

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(1) Surat Al-Baqarah: 172.
(2) Surat Al-Ma'idah: 88 (The Table Spread).
(3) Surat Al-'Araf: 31 (The Heights).
(4) Surat Al-Ma'idah: 87.
(5) Surat Al-'Araf: 32.

From this study, it appears that the Quran never prohibits man from satisfying his physical or psychological desires, but allows him to do this in complete moderation and well-balance. It allows man, for instance, to enjoy rich food, but without excessiveness. The Quran orders: «*Eat and drink, but waste not by excess*». (1)

Sexual Instinct:

Since human life arises out of the union of the two sexes, the male and the female, Islam bestows on such a union its blessings, provided it is completed according to laws and rules.

The Quran states: «*And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts); Verily in that are signs for those who reflect*». (2)

Marriage is necessary for bringing up families to populate the globe, but it is strictly forbidden for man to satisfy his lust by violating other people's honour. The Quran warns: «*Nor come nigh to adultery, for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil, opening the road (to other evils)*». (3)

As a matter of fact, Islam prescribes heavy punishment for adultery so that people should avoid it in order to keep the bonds of society permanently tight and the foundation of the family undestroyed.

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(1) Ibid : 31.
(2) Surat Al-Rum (The Romans).
(3) Surat Al-Isra' : 32.

No Monasticism in Islam:

An example of Islam's call for moderation is the following. Once, Prophet Muhammad was informed that a number of his Companions had practised a sort of Christian monasticism and vowed to keep fasting for ever. Some others swore to spend all their nights in continuous prayers. Another party decided not to marry. On hearing this, the Prophet became angry and expressed his disapproval of their action. He made the historical statement that abolished monasticism in Islam. He said: «By God, I am the most fearful and dutiful to Him. I keep fast and eat also. I say my prayers, but sleep during the night. I also practise marital intercourse. Anyone who does not imitate me is not of my followers». (1)

On another occasion, some people told the Prophet that a certain man keeps fasting the whole day and spends the whole night praying and reciting verses from the Quran. Muhammad enquired: «Who from among you provide him with food and water?» They said: All of us do that. He replied: All of you are more pious than him.

While Buddhism and Christianity regard monasticism the highest degree of human perfection, Islam urges its followers to be active, to produce and deal with life, and to enjoy life's gifts and delights, but with moderation. Islam asks the Muslims to follow a middle course which is outlined in tens and hundreds of Quranic verses. All these verses press man forward to

(1) Al-Bukhari (Chapter: Marriage).

be virtuous, seemly and decent. Good manners and disposition are summarised perfectly and miraculously in this Quranic verse : «*Good commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion. He instructs you that ye may receive admonition*». (1)

Five Cardinal Doctrines of Islam are Founded on Equilibrium :

The five cardinal doctrines of Islam are founded on equilibrium and well-balance between the human body's desires and material benefits and his soul's and spirit's aspirations and sublimity. Islamic worships, unlike any other worships, are not mere ritual practices by priests and oblations offered to gods, from which only the clergy benefit, but physical and spiritual exercise and social practice which benefit the individual as well as the whole community.

Following is a brief account of Islam's five cardinal doctrines.

Affirmation of Belief :

To profess Islam, one must first affirm his belief in the unity of God and the recognition of the Divine Mission of Muhammad as a Messenger of God. It is to be noted that in this obligatory duty of the Muslim is an Islamic peculiarity which combines idealism with realism, the unseen with the seen world, and abstractness with materialism. To believe in one God is an act of divination which stems from the insensuous soul.

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(2) Surat Al-Nahl : 90 (The Bee).

With this belief alone, a Muslim cannot be truthful to his religion; he must have another belief, which is sensuous. He must believe in our Master Muhammad, the human being who had lived in this world, begotten boys and girls, and was buried in a grave under the ground. We must believe in him as the Messenger of God, and as the Prophet who guided us to know that God. If someone declares his belief in God without belief in Muhammad as His Prophet, he is not a Muslim. This is because such a man is believing only in the unseen and not also in the seen world. Islam is based on the two beliefs, on belief in spiritually and materialism, in idealism and realism, and in the unseen and the seen worlds.

Prayers :

The Muslim must perform prayers five times a day, at dawn; at midday; at mid-afternoon; at sunset; and in the evening. It is not enough for a Muslim to declare solemnly his belief in God and His Messenger. He must perform prayers during the day and the night, whether he is in good health or ill, whether he is staying at home or travelling outside. Prayers are the bonds which link a Muslim permanently with his religion. Prayers are the core of Islam. If these five prayers are studied together with their timings, and if their bows and movements are taken into account, it will be found that they are based on equilibrium between the well-being of the body and that of the soul, and between the benefit of the individual and that of the community. When one says his prayers with full and complete dedication of his conscience, heart and feelings to God, he feels that

he is not alone in this world, that he is not a lost creature, and that he is a part and parcel of a whole and of an origin who excells all other creatures. By saying his prayers, man feels his capability of doing anything, thus, he increases his confidence in his own self and strengthens his determination to confront life with courage, tranquility and steadfastness. This is the spiritual and moral advantage which one gets from saying his prayers sincerely and honestly.

The spiritual aspect of prayers is included in various religions. But in Islam, another advantage is added. Prayers benefit man physically and make of him a good and healthy member of the community.

Prayers in Islam are not to be performed unless after ablution. Ablution is a continuous process of cleanliness of the body. This cleanliness is hygienic, spiritual and social. Cleanliness, in fact, is a characteristic of Islam. It is a part of faith. Moreover, prayers are an exercise for man's body. By kneeling and bowing while in prayers, the muscles of people advanced in years become flexible. Other people, of the same age, or even of lesser age, who do not perform such prayers, possess no such stamina.

Congregational Prayers and Discipline and Cooperation:

In the congregational worship with a sermon in a mosque, all the Muslims stand reverently in rows without distinction between a wealthy and a poor, a great or a small. Everyone stands in complete submission and everyone is equal to the other in prayers; all of them are standing before God. Congregational prayers are led

by an Imam (leader) whom people imitate in movement. They listen carefully to what he recites from the Holy Quran. They praise God when he praises Him, and bow when he bows. It is a matter of disgust if a man goes ahead of the Imam in one of his movements. Man is not allowed to raise his head, while prostration, before the Imam raises his, nor would he bow before he bows, or end his prayers before he does so.

The sublimity of this process is manifest during the Hajj (Pilgrimage) season in Mecca. When the prayers are due, about one million pilgrims from various races and countries say their prayers together while surrounding the Holy Ka'bah. There, they are led by one Imam. When he starts recitation from the Holy Quran, they keep silent and show complete submission to God. When he bows or kneels down, they do the same. Despite their big number they bow and kneel as if they were one person. They do this without prior instruction or direction from any person. It was Islam that taught all the Muslims how to imitate and follow the Imam.

This proves that before mankind had known discipline, Islam had taught people how to practise discipline through congregational prayers. There is no doubt that congregational prayers, performed by the inhabitants of a certain locality in a certain mosque five times a day, is a factor of cultivating amity, fraternity and brotherhood among the Muslims.

Fasting Ramadan:

Fasting Ramadan, the month during which the Quran was revealed to Muhammad, is the third doctrine

of Islam. Like other Islamic worships, fasting is of great advantages, spiritual and material, to all the Muslims, individually or collectively. It is an established fact that excess food does immense harm to man's health and it is more healthier for him if he takes little food or abstains from eating and drinking for a certain period. This fact is endorsed by modern sciences which keep a man seeking good health under medical treatment on a special dietary regime.

Fasting is observed by all religions, some of which make it painful and torturous. In Islam, it is not so. To keep fasting, a Muslim is not allowed to eat, drink or smoke between dawn and sunset, after which time he is free to eat and drink and smoke.

There is no doubt that fasting is a good practice for man's soul's instruction and exercise. It makes man feel the pungent of hunger and deprivation from which the poor and the hungry suffer. The month of Ramadan, therefore, is the month of charity, an occasion for purification of man's soul and spirit, and a return to God.

Islam was pioneer in dedicating a certain period in the year, the month of Ramadan, to charity, benevolence and soul's reform. Recently, the world has copied the tradition. It specialises a certain period of the year for making propaganda for a common issue, such as that of cleanliness, saving or tourism.

Ramadan's Value in the Muslims' Eyes:

The Muslims are fully sensible of the good qualities of the month of Ramadan. Fasting is the more liked and appreciated worship by their hearts. To the Muslims,

Ramadan is the best month of the year. Whoever is reluctant in saying prayers during the year makes it a point to perform them regularly in Ramadan. Among the Muslims are people who may not say their prayers regularly, but keep fasting during the whole month of Ramadan.

Greatness of Islamic Unity as Witnessed in Ramadan :

I shall never forget a day in 1938, when the Ambassador of Germany had admiringly expressed to me his feelings for what he had seen of the Muslims' strength and unity during Ramadan. This talk took place while Hitler was on the helm of his country's affairs. He had already made of the German people a bloc of steel which was to move following his orders. This had been accomplished after blood-shed and a reign of terror and oppression. What had astonished the German Ambassador at that time was the discipline and order the Muslims had resorted to in Ramadan, the like of which Hitler could not achieve in his country. It was wonderful, as the Ambassador had confessed, to see all the Egyptians, without exception, abstaining from eating and drinking during the day, but hurrying to eat and drink on hearing a cannon shot fired at sunset. He was surprised to notice that immediately after sunset, the streets of Cairo would become so empty of people and silent, with no traffic at all. This, everybody had done willingly and voluntarily.

On hearing that, I told the Ambassador that what he had seen was not confined to Egypt, but was witnessed everywhere in the world where the Muslims were found.

(Zakat), or, the Poor-Rate :

(Zakat), or, the poor-rate, is the fourth doctrine of Islam. As the institution has a very important social function, it will be discussed later in a special chapter.

Pilgrimage :

The last, and the fifth, cardinal doctrine of Islam, is the performance of pilgrimage which is a completion of Islamic obligations. This obligation, which is incumbent on those whose financial, mental and physical conditions, and family obligations, permit it, produces the proof that **Islam is really a religion that** seeks the well-being of man, individually and collectively, and the salvation of his soul, spirit and body.

Describing the benefits of Pilgrimage, the Quran says : «*And proclaim the Pilgrimage among men ; they will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways ; that they may witness the benefits (provided) for them, and celebrate the name of God, through appointed days*». (1)

Islam had mobilised and united the Muslims gradually. The Muslims perform congregational worship with a sermon in a mosque five times daily, and at noon on Fridays, and also twice annually in the forenoon during the two Feasts of Eid al-Fitr and Eidul Adha. A big number of Muslims gather during the Pilgrimage season in Mecca. There, around the Ka'bah, Muslim pil-

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(1) Surat Al-Hajj : (The Pilgrimage).

grims come from all over the world to praise God, to make charity, to be introduced to each other, to add to their learning and knowledge, and to further trade. This takes place in an atmosphere of equality and human brotherhood. There, millions of pilgrims meet, wearing no clothes save a simple unembroidered, unstitched, white garment, with bare head and either bare-foot or with an unstitched sandal. The cloth is meant to cover the private parts of the body. Pilgrimage, in fact, is a symbol of the journey of life, and an annual re-enactment of the principles of equality and brotherhood.

Religion of Moderation:

To sum up, it could be rightly stated that in all these observances Islam seeks to provide man, individually and collectively, with spiritual and material benefits. Islam does not secure these advantages for the benefit of a certain class or community, but for all mankind. This is done through improving the lot of the individual.

In a point of fact, this is the duty of religions. They had been introduced to serve man here and in the Hereafter. In this, Islam, by moderation and well-balance, excells all other religions.

SOCIAL SOLIDARITY IN ISLAM:

(Zakat) — Poor-Rate:

All religions without exception exhort their followers to be kind and benevolent to the poor and the needy from among themselves. The substance of every religion is peace, fraternity and amity.

Islam is unique in this regard. It does not make general recommendations and directives only, but affirms the necessity of finding out a certain form of economic authropology capable of distributing of wealth and benefits in such a way that realises equilibrium in any society. Islam had decreed that every Muslim who has a surplus of money must contribute to the treasury by a proportion of his wealth for distribution to the poor, the needy, the invalids, all of whom are unable to work and earn livelihood. (1) The (Zakat), the poor-rate, is a basic pillar of Islam without which man cannot be a Muslim.

Apostasy Wars:

When a number of Muslims decided not to pay the (Zakat) after the death of the Prophet, their action was considered a breach in the unity of Muslims and a civil strife aimed at the demolition of the foundation of the Muslim society. Hence, the famous apostasy wars which ended with putting stress on this Islamic institution.

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(1) Anyone who has money equivalent to 200 Dirhams of silver, which does not exceed in value 10 pounds of present currency, has to pay (Zakat), the poor-rate. Previously, 2.5% on cash money and trade contracts had to be paid. On land harvests, one tenth and half a tenth were imposed. Details of (Zakat) are mentioned in detail in books of Islamic jurisprudence.

Right, and not Charity:

The Quran is keen to show that (Žakat) is a right. It says: «*And those in whose wealth is a recognised right for the (needy) who asks and him who is prevented (for some reason from asking)*». (1)

According to this order some of the Muslim scholars are of the opinion that those who are in need of this money are in fact partners in the wealth of those who are asked to pay it. They opine that the poor are allowed to get their share of it, if payment is denied, by all means.

Lowest Level for Sustenance:

Previously, (Zakat) constituted the lowest level required for sustenance of a man. With less than the minimum, man cannot survive. Therefore, it is the duty of the state to raise the rate proportionately so that it would catch up with the dearness of life and the high prices of necessities.

Islam had preceded modern civilisation in realising the welfare of people. Islam had formulated the rules which had not been reached by modern civilisation unless after revolutions, divergencies and sanguinary wars, more than fourteen centuries ago.

Labour, and not Capital, is Source of Production:

In fact, Islam had been the pioneer in defining the substance of modern socialism. It considers labour, and not capital, the main source of production. It strictly

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(1) Surat Al-Ma'arij: 25 (The Ways of Ascent).

prohibits interests on capital. The Holy Quran had never used strong words in condemning anything as it had done in the case of usury. It says: «*O ye who believe; fear God, and give up what remains of your demand for usury, if ye are indeed believers. If ye do it not, take notice of war from God and His Apostle. But if ye turn back, ye shall have your capital sums. Deal not unjustly, and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly*». (1)

According to this, it is the duty of whoever lends money to anyone to take back only the debt, without any interest.

Modern Economy is Based on Interest on Capital:

In order that the reader may realise the greatness of Islam in decreeing this economic principle, considering it as a basic trait of dealings in the Muslim society, he must remember that the modern economic system is based on interest on capital. Everywhere, it is the bankers who dominate through the usurious interest they impose on capitals the economic life and the fate of either individuals, communities, nations or peoples.

The recent history of Egypt shows that one day it had lost its independence and surrendered to British occupation merely because it failed to pay the interest of the loans it had drawn from European banks.

Communist Revolution:

The European community was in need of a violent and bloody revolution to check capitalist oppression. This revolution was staged by Communism. It was so excessive that it did not confine to checking capitalism

(1) Surat Al-Baqarah: 278-279.

only, but to eradicate the capitalists mercilessly. As a consequence, a new form of tyranny was created. It disregarded completely the dignity of man and denied him the right to live rather than to be free.

This was contrary to Islam which had only checked monopoly and exploitation and the evils they entail by depriving capital of interest, the terrible and damaging weapon. In Islam, everyone is free to enjoy the fruits of his own labour.

Islamic Conscience:

Not only had Islam enacted laws to provide the lowest level of sustenance for the invalids and the destitutes and prohibited interest, thus, checking the power of capital, but made expenditure in the way of God, that is the money which is expended on common utilities, on the poor, on the needy and on the grieved, irrespective of their race, religion and sex, a canon of the faith and belief in God. A number of Quranic verses reaffirm this fact. The Holy Quran says: «*And spend of your substance in the cause of God, and make not your own hands contribute to (your destruction)*». (1) It also says: «*And there are those who bury gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God, announce unto them a most grievous penalty*» (2) and «*By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love*» (3) and «*Believe in God and His Apostle, and spend (in charity) out of the (substance) whereof He has made you heir*». (4)

(1) Surat Al-Baqarah: 195.
(2) Surat Al-Tawbah: 34 (Repentance)
(3) Surat Al-'Imran: 92 (The Family of 'Imran).
(4) Surat Al-Hadid: 7 (Iron).

Islamic jurisprudence had gone farther in asking the Muslims to help the needy. It made it permissable for man to absolve his sins by setting slaves free, by feeding the hungry and by helping the poor.

Rise of Social Solidarity Organisations:

As this was the Call of the Quran and the principles of Islam, it was not then surprising to witness in the various Muslim societies of all times the introduction of systems of social welfare and economic cooperation which some people imagine they were of the making of European civilisation.

In the Muslim society, everyone is entitled to receive free medical treatment; every newly-born child is privileged to be under the state's care; and every hungry to be fed freely. These were duties which the society had to discharge through hundreds and thousands of organisations which were established by virtue of endowment. It was something like nationalisation of sources of production for the common interest. Ownership was limited and could not be disposed of for granted. Benefits from ownership were always given to charity.

On this basis were built places of worship, schools, institutes, dispensaries, hospitals and orphanages for the waif, the orphan and the invalid. Prisoners were given jobs after their release; prisoners of war were freed; and slaves were given their liberty. Special houses were founded for foreign guests. Hundreds and thousands of such benevolent organisations had been founded on humanitarian basis. These organisations were not to serve human beings only, but the animals and the birds as well.

Ministry of (Awkaf) — Endowments:

When the Islamic governments began to reorganise themselves on a modern basis they established ministeries for (Awkaf), endowments, to supervise and administer the hundred thousands of acres of land and millions of pounds endowed for social services. This institution was unique and had no parallel even in the most advanced countries.

Many people may not know that Al-Azhar, the greatest and oldest of all world universities, would not have been able to carry out its mission had it not been for the endowments endowed to it. With these endowments, Al-Azhar not only provides free education to foreign students, but also supplies them with free accommodation, food and cloth. No similar institute exists in any country of the world. (1)

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(1) Some people who adhere to progressivism and scientific concepts think that such facilities are no more suitable and that they are nohing but a sort of charity which affects the dignity of man. They opine that such a system should be replaced by introduction of social insurance and security laws and by guarantees provided by the state to all citizens. These people have lost sight of the fact that if this is implemented according to their liking, there shall remain a place for sympathy which induces man to help the needy and the poor, to extend aid to the sick, and to feed the hungry. This, in fact, is what is meant by benevolence.

Though enacted laws are strict and accurate, seeking only absolute justice, yet they cannot cover all cases and fit all circumstances. Sometimes, when applied, the laws bring out sad and painful consequences. Such cases cannot be treated except by an immediate aid extended by an individual out of kindness and compassion.

MISUSE OF AUTHORITY:

We must not forget that laws, regulations and rules are executed by individuals. If these men are not sincere in the

One Body :

Unlike any other religion, Islam had laid down an economic system based on the equitable distribution of utilities and services to all members of the society on a basis of cooperation and solidarity. This is done in conformity with the Prophetic saying: «The believers, in their love and sympathy, are like one body. If a part of it suffers from an illness, all other parts become unrestful, and the whole body spends the night awake, trembling from fever».

This is a remarkable picture of human fraternity which no modern material theory can produce.

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application of laws, they can play tricks and it is easy for them to find loopholes in the laws. The result is that some beneficiaries may be deprived of their dues or at least would not be able to get them in time.

DICTATES OF CONSCIENCE:

Therefore, it becomes imminent that to make a certain system workable and successful or to establish justice among all the citizens, those who are in charge of execution of laws should be conscientious. Hence, the Communists' call for reorientation for the creation of what they call "socialist morals». This, in fact, is a return to dependence on man's conscience in the discharge of duties honestly, either overtly or covertly. They are trying to revive man's conscience after it has been strangled and buried under heaps of materialistic theories amidst various talks about class conflict and victory of the powerful. The Islamic conscience, on the other hand, is that which remained incandescent until it was taken unaware by this plague. This conscience springs from a belief in a Beneficent God Who has pity and mercy on the weak, the invalid and the poor. God requires His devout servants to help the miserable, to solace the grieved and the distressed, to do justice to the oppressed, to extend assistance to the needy, and to hold back the orphans' and the poors' tears. Such a conscience will not allow man to feel comfortable unless after seeing all the faces smilling, the hearts rejoicing, and everyone is filled with hope and optimism.

CONCLUSION

WESTERN SCHOLARS AND ISLAMIC CIVILISATION

Concluding this study on belief and Islamic principles and their impact on human civilisation, we quote some Western scholars who dealt with the subject. In so doing, any contender will realise that anything we have stated here has not been said out of fanaticism or of boasting of the glory of the past. It is not in defence of nationalism either. Our aim is to reach the hearts of the people, irrespective of their religions, races, nationalities, and to appeal to them to work for their own welfare.

In his book (La Civilisation des Arabes), Gustave Le Bon says that the more one goes deep in the study of the Arab civilisation, the more he grasps of it. From such a study, it is proved that in the Middle Ages, the ancient nations had not been known to the world outside except through the Arabs ; that the universities of the West were using all the time books compiled by Arabs. This continued for five hundred years. It is also proved that it was due to the Arabs that Europe had developed in matter, rationality and ethics. Le Bon adds that on studying the achievements of the Arabs and their scientific discoveries, one comes to the conclusion that no other nation had accomplished such achievements in such a short span of time. If one studies their crafts and engravings, he will notice that they excelled

all other nations. If the Arabs' influence was great on the West, it was greater on the East. The world had seen great powers such as the Assyrians, the Persians, the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans, but all of these had vanished, leaving nothing behind except small traces represented in the reminiscences of their religions, languages and arts. Contrary to these are the Arabs. The principal components of their civilisation and culture, their religion, language, crafts, remain alive despite the fact that their power had crumbled. The Arabs were the first tutors who taught the world how free thinking can be reconciled with the directness of religion.

Another great scholar is H.G. Wells. In his book (Short History of the World) he says:

«So it was that the systematic accumulation and criticism of facts which was first begun by the Greeks, was resumed in this astonishing renascence of the Arab world. The seed of Aristotle and the museum of Alexandria that had lain so long inactive and neglected, now germinated and began to grow towards fruition. Very great advances were made in mathematical, medical and physical science. The clumsy Roman numerals were ousted by the Arabic figures we use to this day, and the zero sign was first employed. The very name (algebra) is Arabic. So is the word (chemistry). The names of such stars as Algol, Aldebaran and Bootes preserve the traces of Arab conquests in the sky. Their philosophy was destined to reanimate the mediaeval philosophy of France and Italy and the whole Christian world». (1)

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(1) Page 140.

The American scholar Lutreb Studard says in his book (The Present of the Muslim World) that the new civilisation of the Arabs was a renewed combination of the Greek, the Roman and the Persian cultures. The Arabs had infused in their new culture a new spirit which made it bloomy and opulent. With their genius and Islamic spirit they were able to reconcile the different elements of their culture. Studard adds that in the first three centuries of the history of Muslim kingdoms, from 650 to 1,000 A.D., these countries ruled supreme. They were the most advanced and developed of all other countries. Their capitals were flourishing and their big cities alive. They had nice mosques and well-run scientific universities. These countries had seen the wisdom of the ancient sages and the introduction of the sciences. During all these centuries, the Islamic East continued to beam its light to the Christian West though the Muslim rule had vanished after their defeat.

These Western scholars talk about the Arabs in a general way. Other scholars talk about specific subjects. Among these is the great savant Gutibier. He says that it was the Arabs who taught the West the printing of books and production of gun-powder. It was also they who invented the compass. The Western civilisation had not been able to achieve its successes had it not been for the Arab culture. Before anyone else, the Arabs had known the sun-dial and the mirror. They had excelled in mechanics. When Haroun Al-Rashid, the Abbasid Caliph presented Charlamagne with a big striking clock, the French court was taken aback and failed to discover how it was working. The Abbasids excelled in

mechanics though they were agriculturists. With their genius, the Arabs came to know the advantages and usages of the fruits of Persia and the flowers of Mazandran. They, in fact, had enriched the sciences and introduced many new theories, particularly in botany. It was they who prepared medicines and compounded syrups, greases, ointments, alcohol, electuaries, the seuna, the rhubarb, the purging cassia and the nux vomica. In practising medication, they had to use dossils. In treating epilepsy, they used cupping, and in cases of chronic fever they used cold water. Their surgeons knew how to perform operations to split stones in the bladder and on the eye. It seems that they had known anaesthesia.

Referring to the same subject, but in more detail, Professor Draper, of America, says that in measurements, the Arabs used engineering and mathematical theories. In their writings on mechanics, liquids and optics, the Arabs did not depend on mere vision, but on observation and examination. They had their own instruments. This had paved the way before them for the improvisation of chemistry and instruments for refinement, evaporation and lifting of weights. In cosmography, they used the gunners quadrant and the astrolabe. In chemistry they used the hydrostatics. They prepared tables for relative gravitation and cosmography. These tables were used in Baghdad, Andalusia and Samarkand. Because of all this, they made great improvement in geometry, tragnometry, Algebra and utilisation of arithmatical numerals. In all these achievements, they depended on deduction and tests. In cosmography they not only prepared tables, but drew charts for the

visible stars too. They gave almost all of them Arabic names which are still remembered in astrology. They knew the size of the earth by measuring its circumference. They fixed dates for the sun and lunar eclipse and prepared accurate tables for the movement of both the sun and the moon. They also fixed the duration of the year and of the two equinoctials. They came to know of many other things which contributed tremendously to the advancement of the world. The Arab astrologers invented astronomical instruments to measure time by all kinds of clocks. They were the first to use the pendulum. It was they who introduced chemistry and discovered some of the important acids such as the sulphuric acid, the nitric acid and alcohol. They used these acids in medical treatment. They were the first to introduce pharmacology and mineral preparations. In mechanics, they introducced the laws of weights. They had a particular theory on the nature of gravity and mechanical powers. For the transfer of liquids and hydrostatics they invented the first tables in use of relative gravitation. They wrote essays on floating and sinking of bodies in water. They corrected the Greeks' practice in optics. In the opinion of the Greeks, rays were beamed from the eye, and on touching any visible matter, the matter becomes visible. But the Arabs theorised that the fact was contrary to that; it was the visible object that sent the ray to the eye. The Arabs had known also the reflection and refraction of light. They discovered the curve of light in space and proved that the sun and the moon could be seen before sunrise and after sunset. Professor Draper adds that it is very surprising to note that there are many things which we have pride in stating that they were of our making,

whereas they were of the making of the Arabs. The subject of evolution was taught in their schools.

Referring to the Arab civilisation in Andalusia Draper says that modern Europe is not more tactful, more civilised or more beautiful than the capitals of Andalusia during the reign of the Arabs. At that time, the streets of Andalusia were illuminated and paved with flagstones and the floors of houses covered with carpets. Houses were heated in winter by braziers and aired in summer by letting the air pass through underground tubes filled with perfumes. They had known the baths, the libraries, the restaurants and fountains of fresh water. All over the country were festivities and pomp. Unlike their European neighbours who gave banquets full of rich food and drinks, the Arabs of Andalusia offered little food, and no drinks at all. Their pleasure lay in excursions in their beautiful gardens in the moonlight or in sitting under the orange trees listening to interesting stories or discussing philosophical subjects. They would give excuse for being themselves afflicted with calamities and pain alleging that had the world been without such disasters, they would have forgotten that they were really living in it. They would reconcile their struggle in life and their hope in having an abode in the Hereafter.

In order to have a good idea of the Arab civilisation one has to know what has life been like in Europe at that time.

Professor Draper says that at that time, when the Arab civilisation was flourishing in Andalusia, Europe was full of thick forests due to negligence on the part

of the people. Marshes were surrounding the cities, and their poisonous smells plagued the inhabitants. Houses in Paris and London were built of wood and mud mixed with straw and reeds. They had neither windows nor wooden floors. Carpets were completely unknown to them. Instead, they scattered straw on the floor. They did not know the chimneys. The smoke filled the houses and it leaked to the open through holes they made in the roofs of the houses. Household were thus exposed to grave illnesses. They did not know the meaning of cleanliness. They used to pile the intestines of fowls and the garbage outside doors. Bad smells would contaminate the air and no one cared for that. The whole family, men, women and children, used to sleep in one room. Usually, they gave space in this very room to their pets.

Draper continues to say that the Europeans did not know the bedstead. They used two bags, the lower full of straw, and the upper, which was also used as a pillow, of wool. The wealthy from among them would eat meat only once a week. Their streets had no drainage system, flagstones or lamps.

Draper concludes by saying that as a result of this backwardness, Europe was overcome by superstitions.

At that time, Europe treated illnesses by seeking help from the holy places. The art of medicine was dead and in its place came the quack-doctors. Whenever the country was afflicted with an epidemic, the priests were to hurry to say prayers, taking no notice of the necessity of cleanliness. As a result, many people lost their lives. This happened on more than one occasion.

Islamic Civilisation :

In making a comparison between Europe in the Middle Ages and the Arabs of that time, one would certainly realise that without Islam the Arab civilisation would not have flourished. The Arab civilisation was the product of Islam. Before Islam, the Arabs of Central Arabia, except a quite few, were ignorant and illiterate. They had known no civilisation or culture. Similarly, they had no state. (1) On the land lived scattered tribes, which wandered about the desert. But the moment the Quran was transmitted to them, and Islam became their faith, they were able to realise all the achievements which had amazed everyone.

Islam will remain the light which guides those who go out of the right way, those who are uncertain of their stand, and those who grope about awkwardly in darkness and in the world of materialism. The Islamic Call for cooperation and fraternity among all peoples will remain the noble goal for the realisation of which everyone must work on a basis of love.

Praise be to the Lord of the Universe.

(1) This applied to the Arabs of Hejaz among whom Islam had sprung. In south-east Arabia before Christ, there was a flourishing civilisation in the Yemen during the reign of Queen Balqis.

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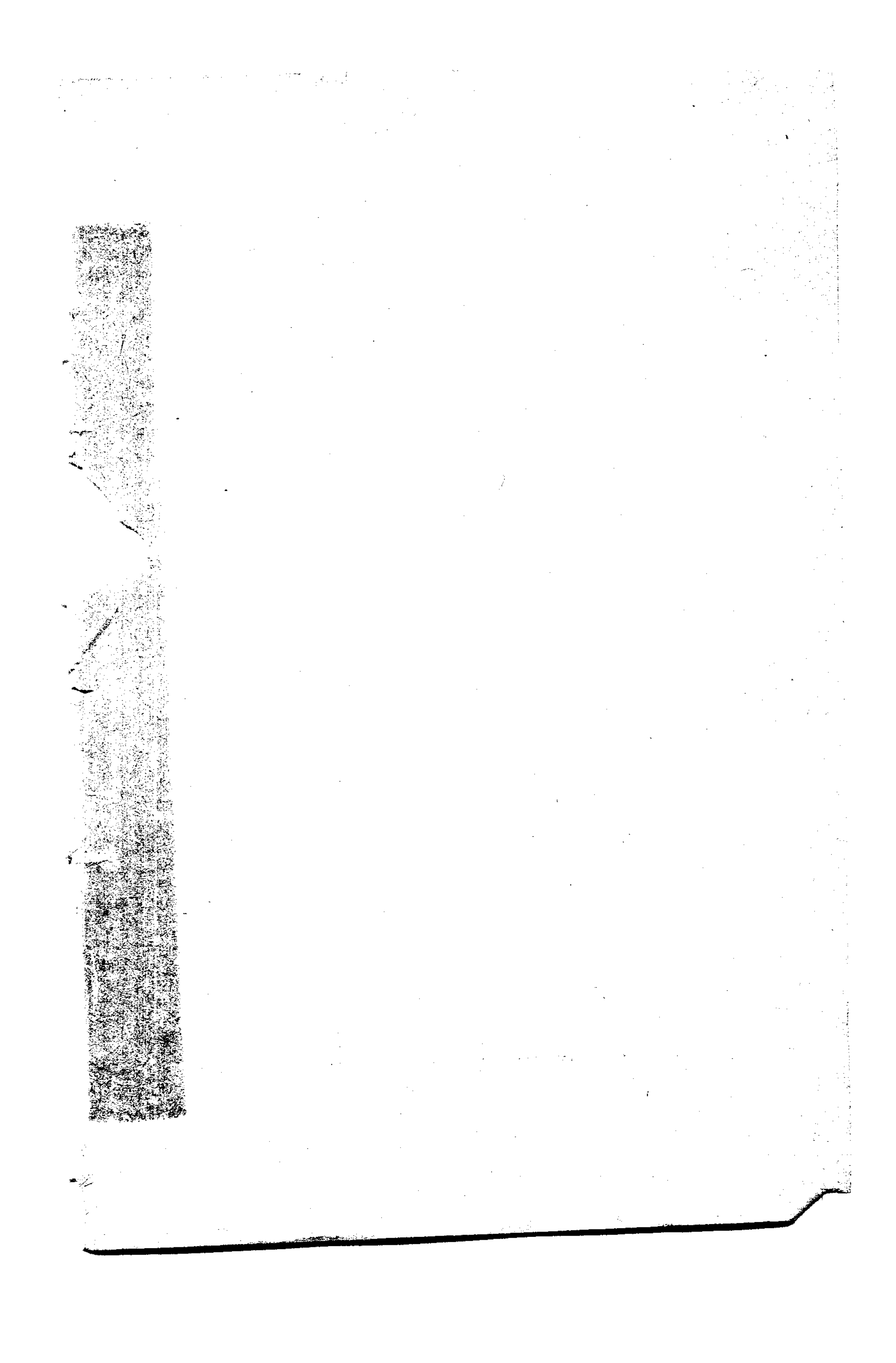
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